THE UK'S NO.1 MULTIFORMAT GAMES MAG

GAMES MASTER



STAR WARS

BATTLEFRONT

EA

YOUR COMPLETE GUIDE TO THE BIGGEST GAME IN THE GALAXY



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THE UK'S NO.1 MULTIFORMAT GAMES MAG

GAMES MASTER

Issue 297 / December 2015

WIN!
Your very own BB-8 droid from Star Wars! See p94 to enter.

"We've delved so deep we've taken on Wookie-ish traits..."



People often talk about the magic of cinema, and we're all aware of how powerfully games can induce the odd goose-bump. This month those two avenues of awesome cross streams as we get an up-close look at the ludicrously exciting Star Wars Battlefront.

And we're not talking about anything as simple as a hands-on, either. With tips and tricks direct from DICE, and a retro-splosion featuring every Star Wars game ever, we've delved so deep into a galaxy far, far away that we've taken on Wookie-ish traits. Or maybe that's just because we've been up all hours playing it...

If, by some unfortunate quirk, Star Wars isn't quite your kettle of banthas, we're still loaded with epic stuff, so get stuck in, enjoy your GM, and let us know how you get on!

Matt Sakuraoka-Gilman – Editor

EDITOR'S CHOICE
MY TOP PICKS THIS ISSUE



14 What do The Goonies and Minecraft have in common? Telltale tells all, and it's fascinating.

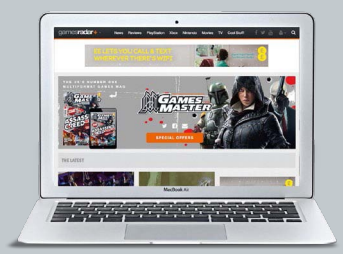


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GET MORE FROM YOUR GM!



Online at www.gamesradar.com/gamesmaster



...or subscribe. See page 92 for details.



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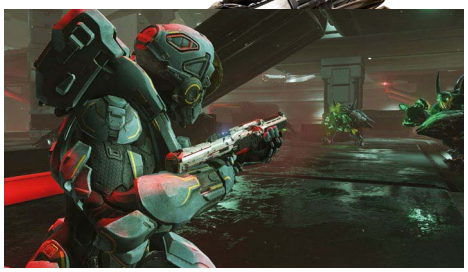
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He might not have asked for this, but we sure did. We've got our cyber-implanted mitts on Adam Jensen's next foray into corporate consipracy-laden espionage!



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Team GM

Meet The Magazine's Makers!



THE MOST DEDICATED TEAM IN THE BUSINESS

These folk are responsible for the best gaming mag on the planet, stopping at nothing to get the scoops, play the games, and make the puns that would make others tire, flinch, or dry heave respectively.



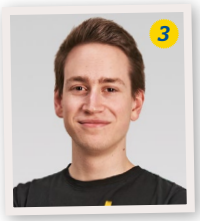
Matt Sakuraoka-Gilman

Our roguish editor always shoots first – including in his initial forays in Battlefront, as it turns out. We've not been able to look at him quite the same way since seeing him blast Luke Skywalker point-blank in the face with a Cycler rifle...



Sam Freeman

What do you get when you cross an art-led Star Wars cover feature, a set of Nintendo papercraft dice, and a custom Street Fighter V special? Sam 'Chewbacca' Freeman would know, but he's been responding only with growls and roars since deadline day.



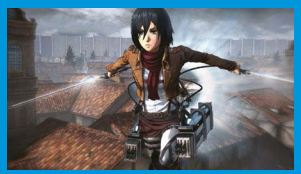
Robin Valentine

Our resident protocol bot had a tough decision to make when he went to get a new phone. He didn't want to go with Apple, but he couldn't find the 'Droid he was looking for. Perhaps he was looking in Alderaan places... We'll leave.

The BIG GAME finder



World Of Final Fantasy
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Attack On Titan
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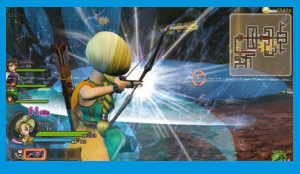
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The Splatoon community is huge – there are plenty of skilled opponents out there to pit yourself against.

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Breaking pad

I had to share a story from playing Splatoon, after seeing DJ Octavio in the top five boss fights list last issue...

I remember playing through the fight, miraculously surviving all of the attacks he threw at me, with only one life remaining. Unfortunately, I ignored a red blinking light on my GamePad... and when I got to the point where I only had to hit him one more time to win the battle, it ran out of charge! I frantically searched for the charger, but it was too late – I was smacked upside the face with his attacks, and it was all over. I was so frustrated that I didn't attempt it again for about a week. It's still an excellent game, though, and one I need to get back to – when I finally tear myself away from Super Mario Maker, of course...

Sam Og, Facebook

We know that feeling, Sam! Many moons ago, editor Matt was on the cusp of finishing Weapon Master in Soul Calibur II, when his dog sat on the power cable and shut the console off. In his frustration, he slammed his controller down, and it smashed into shards, slicing his thumb open. These games should come with health warnings...

Birthday station

The PlayStation 1 turned 20 last month, and we asked you lot for your favourite memories of the classic console:

Completing both Resident Evil & Tomb Raider over the summer of 1996. Good times with probably the best console ever. It really had it all!

Samuel Hamilton, Facebook

Playing through Batman & Robin has become one of my greatest memories. Certainly more fun than the film...

Daniel Climo, Facebook

My ten year old little brother playing Resident Evil and literally pooing himself when the first zombie looked up at the camera! Loved Final Fantasy VII too – many a day lost to that beauty.

Gregg Patterson, Facebook



LETTER OF THE MONTH

Joseph asks, are casual fans affecting multiplayer modes?

After reading great reviews of Super Mario Maker online, I went out and bought a copy on launch day. I spent the next couple of days shaking Koopas, placing Chain Chomps, and swatting giant robot flies with a childlike glee. However, after seeing the world react to my masterpieces, I was surprised. Comments mostly consisted of "that was hard", "too difficult", and "really unfair", and of 60 attempts on my relatively straightforward levels, only two successfully reached the end.

This got me thinking. Are we 'serious' gamers just the minority? As I carry my team in Splatoon or wombo-combo my rivals in Smash Bros, am I the odd one out? Granted, I've been gaming for years, but are we gamers dying out as our hobby achieves mainstream success? I love facing a challenging enemy player – it's better than any AI. Nothing is more satisfying in a video game then a well-earned victory. When your opponents are a cakewalk, winning feels hollow. There is no denying it: more casual players are affecting multiplayer, but for better or worse?

Joseph Dive, email

We can understand your frustration, but more players taking part in our favourite games is always a good thing – apart from anything else, it leads to bigger, longer-lasting multiplayer communities – and separating them into 'casuals' and 'hardcore' can lead to elitism. The more the merrier, we say! If you still need more of a challenge then there are loads of forums online brimming with skilled players for all sorts of games to arrange matches with. ■



People get better with practice, so try offering to coach those less experienced to help improve their skills.

WIN!

Got an opinion? Have even the barest grasp of words and how to put them together? The best letter bags a free mystery game!*

*Don't forget to include your postal address and chosen format!

READER'S TOP 5 | STAR WARS GAMES

The Force is strong with Steve's list of X-Wing-flying, lightsaber-swinging titles



1 Rogue Squadron II

Arguably the best launch game ever – and it included the first game as a multiplayer extra!

2 Knights Of The Old Republic

The best Star Wars RPG by a mile. I soaked hours of play into it – such a great story!

3 Battlefront 2

The game that convinced me to get Xbox Live – one of my first online experiences on console.

4 Jedi Power Battles

Although it was unfortunately full of glitches, it was a great two-player game.

5 Battle For Naboo

Its planet-side combat changed things up after the space battles of Rogue Squadron.

Steve Gillen, Facebook

Disagree? Then why not tell us what your top five would be over on our Facebook page. We won't bite. Hard. ■



"I FOUND MYSELF DRENCHED IN ONE OF THE WORST GAMES EVER"

This reminiscing has triggered another painful gaming memory for Matt: "Croc: Legend Of The Gobbos was my first PS1 game. I'd saved up pocket money for the hallowed grey slab off the back of a Resident Evil and Final Fantasy session at a mate's house, and suddenly found myself drenched in one of the worst games ever. It was all gravy from then on, of course, but I'll never forget that first evening with that almost comically bad crock of swamp bilge."

Phantom pains

So I just completed MGSV last night, and I don't think I completely understand all the emotions I'm feeling. Finishing it is a strange experience for me, and every other gamer that has been attached to the series for most of their lives. We know that this is most likely the last ever entry in the series, so that makes us sad, but it was a fantastic experience of a game (though not without it's faults) that definitely deserves to be received with applause and praise.

But I have one huge problem. It's most likely my own fault, but when all the David Hayter stuff happened, and we found out we'd be building Mother Base, a story started to form in my head. A story that, unfortunately, didn't unfold in the final game, and that I think would have made the game's last chapter so much better... It left me feeling that the messy Kojima/Konami split had more repercussions for the game and its story than they let on.

Shane Byrne, email

Sorry Shane, but we had to cut a chunk of your letter out to avoid spoilers! MGSV is such a huge game, loads of people still haven't finished it yet.

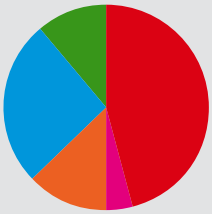
With such a great weight resting on the story's shoulders, after such a long time and so much build-up, we think it's only natural to have come up with theories of your own of how you wanted it to go.

It was never going to be able to meet everyone's expectations, but we do agree that it felt like something might be missing, and certainly intrepid online investigators have found cut ending content on the disk, suggesting the final section did get a major reshuffle. It might not mean anything – lots of games undergo story changes during development – but it's hard not to wonder if such extreme conflicts behind the scenes had an effect. ■



OFF THE CHART!

A pie so tasty it'll get your tongue tweaking



46% Remembering the PS1 fondly...
4% ...or saying that the N64 was better
13% Your favourite videogame monsters
26% Pokémon as real-life pets
11% The best ever stealth game

YOUR TOP 5 MOST WANTED

Bethesda's post-apocalypse slips down a place as Shenmue fever grips GM's readers...



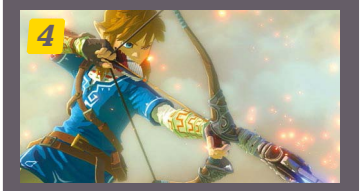
1 SHENMUE 3
Format PS4, PC **ETA** December 2017
Still easily the most unexpected game we reported on this year – looks like you can't wait for this to become reality.



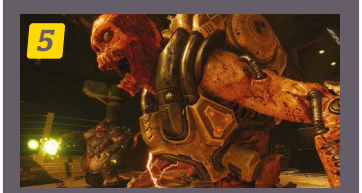
2 FALLOUT 4
Format PS4, XO, PC **ETA** 10 November
It's so close we can almost taste that irradiated water already... Get your month off work booked in now.



3 FINAL FANTASY VII REMAKE
Format PS4 **ETA** 2017
And here's the second most unexpected game! Those warm, nostalgic feelings are already creeping in for you lot.



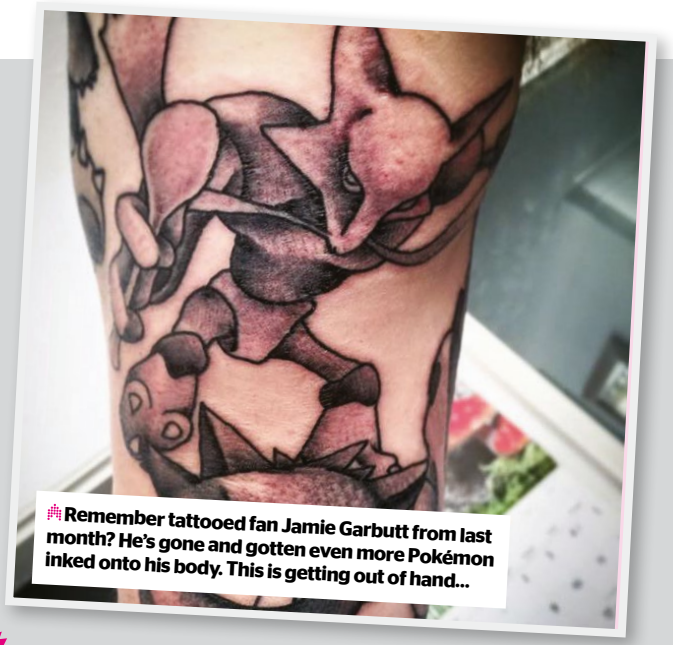
4 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA
Format Wii U **ETA** 2017
Will it be this generation, or the next? Either way, you're desperate to step into Link's shoes and wander an open world.



5 DOOM
Format PS4, XO, PC **ETA** Spring 2016
We can already feel the gore squishing between our toes. Ugh, we accidentally grossed ourselves out.

YOU LOVE GAMES

Cool stuff and videogame culture



Remember tattooed fan Jamie Garbutt from last month? He's gone and gotten even more Pokémon inked onto his body. This is getting out of hand...

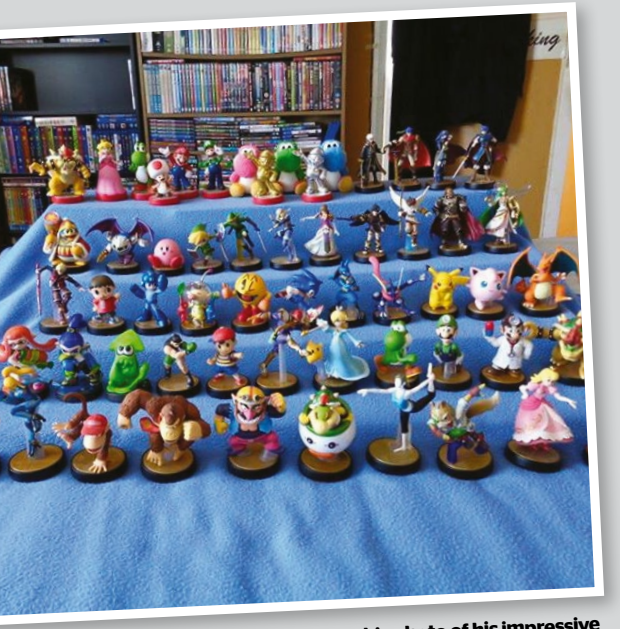
YOUTUBE STAR



YouTuber Madeyewlook's Until Dawn clown makeup is even scarier than the game itself! Check her out at http://bit.ly/gmclown



Ever wanted to know what the Sea Salt Ice Cream from Kingdom Hearts tastes like? Now you can make it yourself with Youtuber Rosanna Pansino's recipe – see it at http://bit.ly/gmhearts



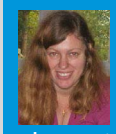
Reader Ray Netley sent in this photo of his impressive amiibo collection. He's got even more than we do!



We love it when our fans go big. Damian Gale sent us this image of him reading his copy of GM on a 42 inch screen!

SOCIAL GROUSING

Wisdom and weirdness from our bustling social media channels



Solid Snake is definitely the coolest videogame character of all time, and the games are like playing movies. The original Metal Gear Solid was the best game on the PS1.

Julia Taylor, Facebook



That triangle from Asteroids is the greatest spaceship in games. Minimalist as can be, but it certainly gets the job done.

Ryan Booth, Facebook

MANIAC OF THE MONTH!



The best zombie game is Call Of Duty: Black Ops II, because you don't have the play the zombies mode. They should be avoided at all costs...

Jamie Garbutt, Facebook



Ditto could turn into me and go to work for me while I sit at home and get paid.

Aaron O Neill, Facebook



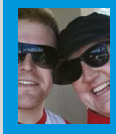
Mother from House Of The Dead: Overkill was just grotesque, and what happened after beating her scarred me for life!

Martin Alliker, Facebook



Every game I've looked forward to has been disappointing. This gen has sucked...

Richard Skelton, Facebook



Best memory of the PS1? Upgrading to the N64!

Rick Ashton, Facebook

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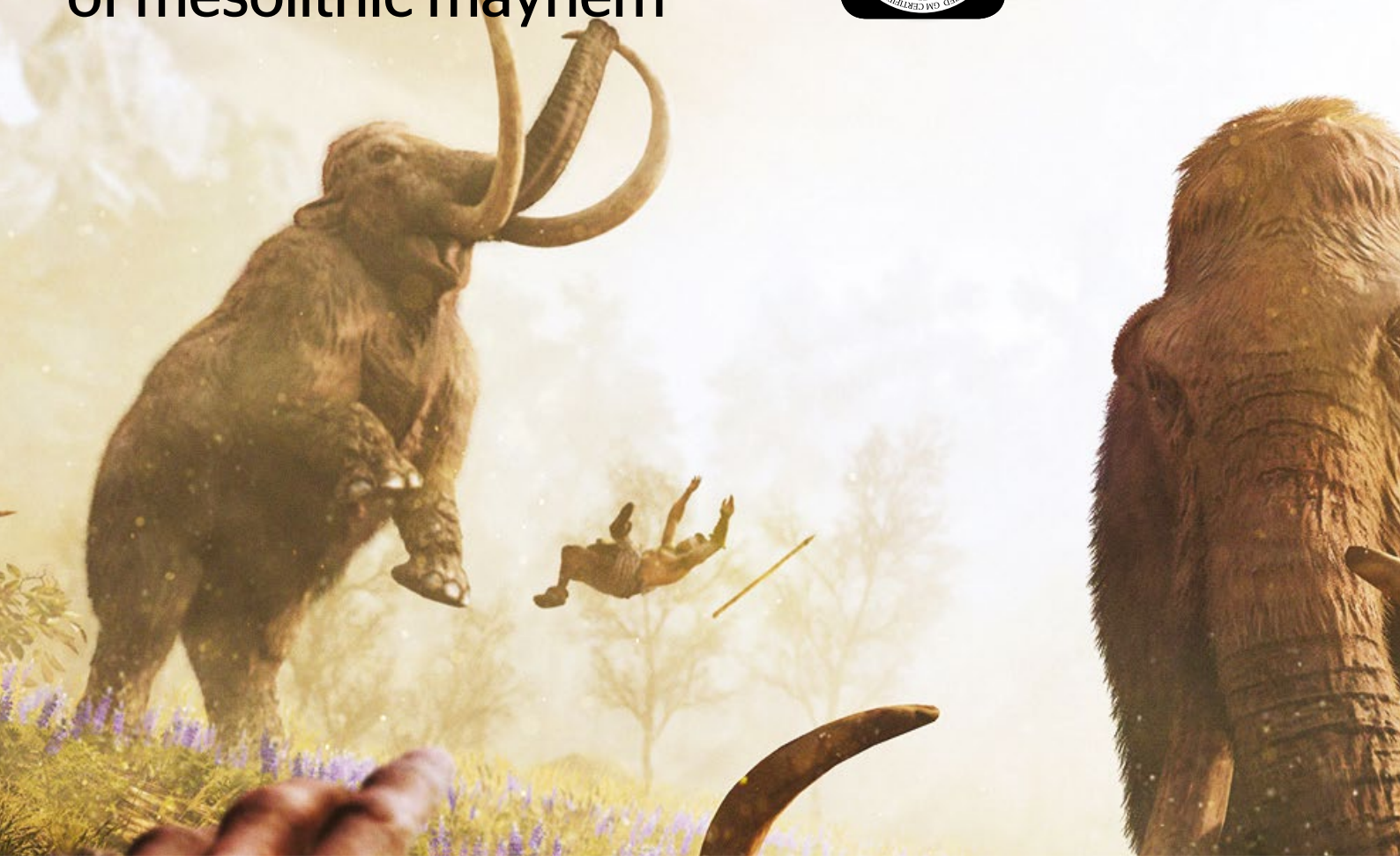
12 SPECIAL delivery



Ready to head into the wasteland? Not until you've read our eight top Fallout 4 perks, you're not.

MAMMOTH NEWS

Ubisoft unveils **Far Cry Primal**, an open-world slice of mesolithic mayhem



CRAFTY SO-AND-SO

Weapon vendors were a rarity back in 10,000 BC – you'll have to make your own instead



Weapon crafting is new to the series, and Ubi is promising lots of Stone Age melee and ranged gear.



Getting the materials you need will require taking down the dangerous beasts that roam the wilds.



Hunting the likes of mammoths and saber-toothed tigers won't be easy – but your tribe will back you up.

14 Tell-all



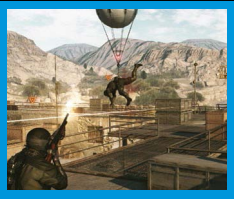
The studio that reinvented the adventure genre tells us a tale of their latest game.

18 Race off



Is it a game? Is it a toy? Whatever it is, Anki Overdrive is blowing Team GM's collective mind.

19 Solid state



We've sent our agent to infiltrate Metal Gear Online – and you need to see the intel he's found.



The hairy beasts prove genuinely intimidating up close, and that tough hide can absorb a heckuva lot of spears.



If there's a common thread uniting the Far Cry games, it's beautiful but violent frontiers; places on that uncertain border between civilisation and nature. Previous instalments have played out that tension in the tropics, the Himalayas, and in a crumbling African nation. Rather than a geographic location, however, this new entry places its conflict in a prehistorical moment, 10,000 BC – a time when humans were making their first attempts to parcel off some portion of the wild for themselves.

In one sense, then, Far Cry Primal is a natural extension of the series – in another, it's a radical departure. After all, there are no vehicles to joyride, no towers to climb, and no molotovs to hurl in 10,000 BC. We're hopeful that Ubisoft will take this opportunity to pare back some of its bloated open-world design elements. Perhaps it could do without a map that's covered with a dozen different markers – if your prehistoric protagonist has a map at all.

Speaking of which, the game casts you as Takkar, the only survivor of a brutal ambush that wiped out his hunting group. Now, with his tribe scattered, he sets out to reunite his people and ensure their safety in a world of deadly mega-fauna and bitter tribal rivalries. So you'll be loosing arrows into wooly mammoth hide and plunging spears into saber-toothed tigers, as well as fending off human assailants armed with flint axes and brutal cudgels.

Eternal flame

While previous Far Cry games have allowed players to craft ammo pouches, quivers, and syringes, Primal promises an expanded system wherein animal remains and environmental resources can be combined to create new weaponry, as well as items and consumables. And much like Far Cry 2, fire will play a central role in this latest instalment. Ubisoft promises that mastering flame will be central to your survival, and just as important as getting to grips with your Stone Age arsenal. Takkar can use torches as weapons against beasts and fellow man alike, but at night fire becomes indispensable, as you'll find yourself lost and vulnerable without its light.

It's not all change, of course – Primal will still feature outposts to assault or infiltrate, and much like previous entries in the series, you're encouraged to make use of careful observation and planning in order to succeed (and with much of Takkar's tribe dead, it makes sense to be cautious). But without guns, explosives, vehicles, or even a proper knife in the picture, the challenges you'll face are likely to be very different than we've seen in past entries.

It's certainly not what we expected from the next Far Cry game, but its early 2016 launch window seems like the perfect time for a dramatic shake-up of the growing series. After all, you know what these Ubisoft guys say about doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result... ■

"MASTERING FLAME WILL BE CENTRAL TO YOUR SURVIVAL – JUST AS IMPORTANT AS YOUR WEAPONS"

The Burning Question

Who or what is the greatest predator in videogames?

Microtransactions
They appear, and before you know it, your wallet has been skinned alive...
Chris Wilson, Facebook

The Predator
In Predator 2 on the Master System – when those red dots appeared, it was sheer panic!
John A. Murray, Facebook

Visit www.facebook.com/officialgamesmaster and www.twitter.com/gamesmaster to take part in next issue's burning questions.

ALL IN A DAY'S PERKS

Our favourite picks for building your wasteland warrior in Fallout 4

The levelling system in Bethesda's epic latest isn't exactly business as usual. Skills are out and perks are king, with 70 of the blighters split into 275 ranks across the seven SPECIAL stats (that's Strength, Perception, Endurance, Charisma, Intelligence, Agility, and Luck, in case you've forgotten!). With so much choice, you might be feeling a little overwhelmed as you take those first few tentative steps into the wasteland. Don't worry, as ever Team GM is here to help. We've chosen our eight top perk picks – make this selection your priority, and we guarantee you won't die an ignoble, irradiated death in the middle of the desert. Probably. Ok, maybe 'guarantee' is too strong a word, but we've got a real good feeling about them at least. And hey, if these don't work out for you, or you swear by your own magic eight, why not get in touch and let us know how wrong we are?





VANS

Lead producer Todd Howard reckons that even after 400 hours of playing Fallout 4, he still hasn't seen everything. With a world that huge, you'd be forgiven for getting a bit lost every now and again. Fortunately, this perk is here to assist. Standing for Vault-Tec Assisted Navigation System, it shows you the path to your next objective whenever you go into VATS mode. It might even help you stay on course when a million sidequests are jockeying for your attention...



STRONG BACK

If you're anything like us, you'll be picking up everything in the wasteland that isn't nailed down – especially now that the crafting system allows even the most seemingly useless of junk to be broken down into vital materials. And hey, you never know when a dirty old teddy bear might come in handy, right? Put ranks into this perk to increase your carry weight limit, and gain the ability to fast travel and sprint while encumbered, for maximum hoarding potential.



GUN NUT

In Fallout 4, guns are more customisable than ever before, with over 700 different mods for the game's 50+ weapons, so there's no excuse for just settling for that busted up rifle you found under a raider's bedroll. Not just anyone can start fiddling with deadly machinery willy-nilly, however – you'll need to put a couple of points into Intelligence and grab yourself some ranks in this perk first. The more you level it up, the more powerful the mods you can use.



GUNSLINGER

A fancy gun isn't much use if you don't have the expertise to use it properly, though. The game's many weapon perks will come in handy here, from the auto-fire buffs of Commando to the single shot rifle-focused Rifleman. Our top pick is this little beauty – each rank will make you increasingly adept with pistols, starting with a 20% damage boost, and eventually giving you tricks like a greater chance to disarm foes, and the ability to instantly cripple enemies' limbs.



LONE WANDERER

Let's face it – the human companions in Bethesda's games have always been decidedly naff. Getting in the way, falling into traps, running into the path of attacks... We've been burned too many times to put our faith in Fallout 4's allies – better to grab this perk and go it alone. As long as you're on your lonesome, it grants bonuses to your damage resistance and carry weight limit, removing the need for a buddy to soak up bullets and lug your stuff around for you.



ATTACK DOG

Man's best friend is a different matter though, of course. How could we turn this adorable Alsatian away? From gathering items to savaging foes, he's almost the perfect pet for a wasteland wanderer – all he needs is a little extra training. Each rank in this perk will give him new skills, including the ability to grab onto enemies and hold them in place, granting you a bonus to hit them in VATS. Good boy!





SNEAK

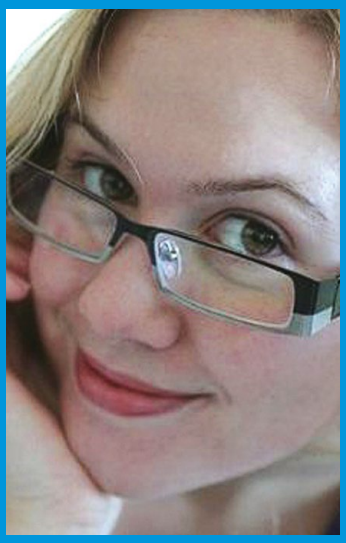
When a big stick won't do, it's time to walk softly. In Fallout, there have always been situations it's safer to creep around than head into all-guns-blazing – and sometimes you just want to get up to your shady, nefarious business without anyone seeing you. With this perk you're the ultimate master of stealth, making it harder for enemies to detect you, and with later ranks you'll be light-footed enough to run silently while sneaking, and walk over traps without setting them off.



INTIMIDATION

Charisma's always been a powerful tool in Fallout, but with this perk it becomes a true force to be reckoned with. Point a gun at a human enemy with a lower level than you, and at rank one they'll be pacified and turn peaceful. Drop another point in, and you can turn them against their former allies. One final, cackling level up will let you turn people entirely to your will, giving them whatever commands you like – and putting you firmly on the path to becoming ruler of the wasteland.

DEV Q+A



"WE WROTE THREE THINGS ON A WHITEBOARD: THE GOONIES, GHOSTBUSTERS, AND PIXAR MOVIES"



Minecraft: Story Mode pulls a narrative out of a global sandbox, but how did the studio do it? GM goes behind the scenes with Telltale's **Laura Perusco** to find out

The studio behind The Walking Dead is facing its greatest challenge yet: creating a story-driven spin-off of the biggest videogame in the world. Sat in a darkened Soho screening room clutching a scattered few hours' sleep, creative communications manager Laura Perusco is admirably upbeat as she explains just how Telltale gained the keys to the kingdom of Minecraft – and what they've unlocked.

Q How does Telltale choose its next franchise?

A Mostly, we all just want to work on stuff that we really love. We look at what people in the office are playing or watching, and then approach licence holders. With Minecraft, we were already working on Tales From The Borderlands, which is a game set in another videogame's universe. We were like, "Well, this is cool, how can we do that with something else?".

Q This is a different kettle of fish, right, since Minecraft lacks story?

A Why would I want to put fish in my kettle? But you're right, we realised that people in Minecraft want stories. You see people on YouTube who are creating videos based on stories they've created in the Minecraft universe and this huge community around them. It was obviously something that people were interested in, and so we approached Mojang and they were into it.

"WE REALISED THAT PEOPLE IN MINECRAFT WANT STORIES, SO WE APPROACHED MOJANG AND THEY WERE INTO IT"

Q Did any Minecraft lore inspire the Story Mode narrative?

A Yes! Did you notice that everyone in The Order Of The Stone [the four heroes who provide the game's premise] represents particular ways in which people play Minecraft? Some people love building and architecture, that's what Soren embodies. Some people are really into building complex machinery – that's Ellegaard, she's the engineer. Some people just mess up other people's servers and generally cause trouble, so that's Magnus. Gabriel the warrior is everyone who plays Minecraft to hunt and kill the strongest monsters.

Q Are there any cool easter eggs hiding in there?

A Did you notice that the character who introduces Gabriel the warrior on stage at Endercon is actually Lydia Winters? She's the brand director at Mojang – so the model is designed to look like her, and has her voice. Endercon is basically supposed to be Minecon, so we thought, why not include a cameo from someone at Mojang?

Q So, was Mojang involved in the creative process at all?

A Definitely. In the beginning, Mojang came to visit our offices for a big meeting, where we wrote three things on a whiteboard. These were what we wanted the story to feel and look like, and what tonally would guide us as we developed the game. The first was The Goonies, the second was Ghostbusters and the third was Pixar movies. Basically, we wanted to make it like an all-ages movie that didn't feel too kid-like.

Q But the final release has been given a 12+ age rating?

A The Goonies and Ghostbusters were made in the days before a PG13 rating, which really affected the quality of the movies that were being made for kids as well as adults. We were going for that kind of tone.

Q Most players think of your games as choose-your-own-adventures, but often the choices you can make don't have a huge effect on how things play out. Has that changed?









A I would say we don't necessarily make choose-your-own-adventure games in the sense that those normally have 16 different endings for every story. Obviously, we're not going to make 16 different games where you end up in 16 different places, but we try to have these branching divergent paths that are all part of one core story. So the challenge for us is how we have that core path, but still make it feel like your choices matter, even when they bring you back to those main story beats.

Q This is the first Telltale game where you can choose your gender – how did that come about?

A In Mojang's Minecraft, people are used to being able to choose what gender they're going to be. Meanwhile, at Telltale, we're normally telling a story about specific characters, so we don't want you to be able to customise it too much. The Walking Dead Season Two is a story about a little girl called Clementine – I don't know if it would be a different story with a little boy in that lead role.

With Minecraft, we realised that what gender your character is wouldn't necessarily have much of an impact on the story – it's more about how you play them. Female Jesse is more sassy, cavalier, and forward, whereas Patton Oswalt [who voices male Jesse] has that kind of wide-eyed innocent quality to his delivery, so they do come across a little different. I really enjoy them both.

Q Did you use your normal game engine for Story Mode?

A We actually built a lot of environments in Minecraft and then exported them into the Telltale engine. We wanted it to look and feel exactly like it, but obviously we layered some stuff over the top to make it feel more cinematic, like depth of field changes that you don't see in actual Minecraft. Or, for example, in regular Minecraft, railtracks are just texture on a flat block, but in Story Mode we made them raised. I would walk around the office and I'd see people playing Minecraft and I'd be like, "Are you working ? I don't even know!". ■



GM ONE SHOT THRILL
THE NEWEST INFO ALL WRAPPED UP IN ONE PIC

HERE WE RYO AGAIN

Suzuki doubles down on story to make Shenmue 3 on a budget

It may be the most highly-funded videogame project to ever grace Kickstarter, but that doesn't mean that developer Yu Suzuki is flush for cash. The industry veteran has gone on the record as saying he "could do with a bit more money", and launched a 'Slacker Backer' programme, enabling tardy fans to continue contributing.

Predictably, not everyone has reacted favourably to Suzuki's suggestion that more dosh might be required, but the original Shenmue was a famously pricey project. When it launched for the Dreamcast in 1999, the innovative open-world odyssey became the most expensive game ever released. SEGA claimed it spent some $70 million on the project, although Suzuki would later claim it was "only $47 million". Bargain!

So how the heck is Suzuki going to make Shenmue 3 a reality with a comparatively paltry $6.3 million in Kickstarter pledges? Well, first of all, it's worth noting that crowdfunding isn't the only source of cash for the developer, and partners such as Sony have already made private contributions to the game's budgets. Nevertheless, strategic compromises will clearly have to be made.

Oh Yu!

Visual fidelity is one sacrifice that Suzuki seems happy to make, explaining that the game itself "doesn't have to be gorgeous visually". Nor will the studio be attempting to rigorously update the Shenmue formula for the twenty-first century, so don't expect a world packed with collectibles and climbable towers. Instead, he considers narrative the core component of the experience, and plans to focus his resources on advancing the story of Ryo's quest for revenge.

But players shouldn't expect Shenmue 3 to provide them with any firm closure on that front, as the remaining narrative extends far beyond what can be covered in a single game. Is Shenmue 4 on the cards then? It's certainly possible, should Suzuki's latest go gangbusters at launch. Fans of Ryo Hazuki can vote with their wallets once again when Shenmue 3 launches in late 2017. ■

"CROWDFUNDING ISN'T THE ONLY SOURCE OF CASH – SONY HAS MADE A PRIVATE CONTRIBUTION"

THE BIG DEBATE

This month we ask the question...

Is crowdfunding a good thing?



The Dev

Peter Bartholow
CEO, Lab Zero Games

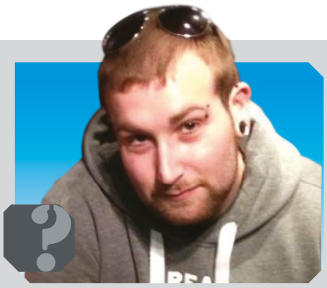
Crowdfunding could be considered a reaction to publishers not fulfilling demand for games and genres that they might consider too niche to be worth their while. And those are the sorts of games we'd like to continue to make!



The Critic

Matt Sakuraoka-Gilman
Editor

I'm so happy we live in a world in which the likes of Wasteland 2, Pillars Of Eternity, and, yes, Shenmue 3 can be made. But it does feel unnerving to know that a game can be 'successful' before it's even been finished.

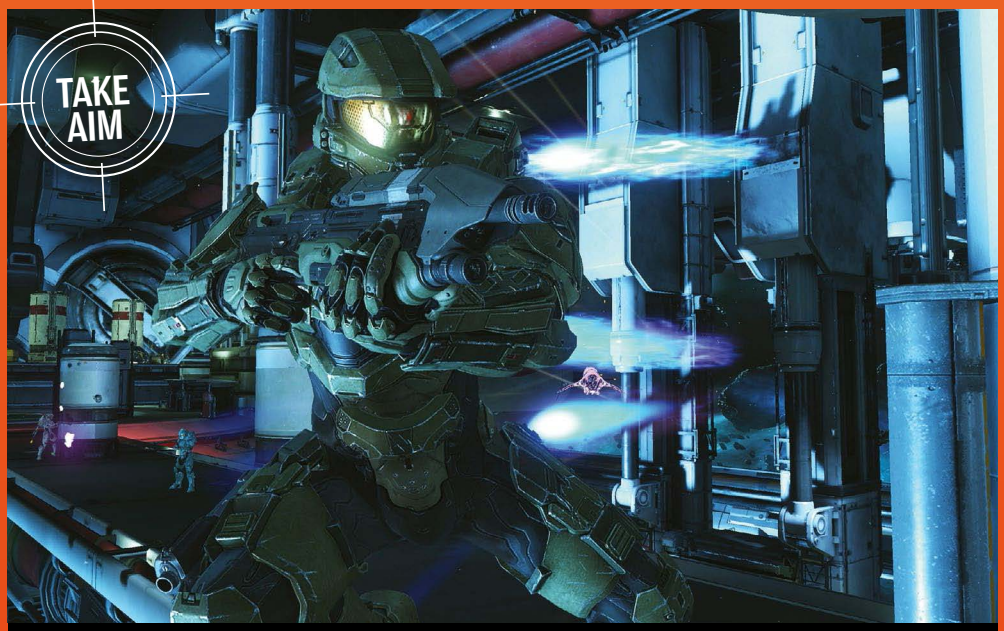


The Fan

Ross Murphy
GM Reader

It was a great idea in theory, until it started being abused, and now we're flooded with half-finished games, and millions of euros/pounds/dollars have been wasted because Kickstarters haven't raised what they really needed.

TAKE AIM





"Don't despair – a raft of independent developers are carrying the torch"

James Nouch misses local multiplayer in triple-A games as much as the next person – but it looks like the indies are ready to save the day

It was in 1999 that I first awakened to social gaming, and I have Rare to thank for that. Well, Rare and my older brother, who grabbed a copy of Goldeneye and had the good grace to include me in the after-school multiplayer matchups that followed.

I was reminded of these splitscreen shootouts years later, at uni, when Mario Kart and Rock Band brought ta house of disparate weirdoes together in the glow of shells and solos.

Like many GM readers, then, I was saddened to hear that Halo 5 would be the first instalment in the series to omit split-screen co-op. And 343 Industries isn't the only developer to shift its priorities in recent years. Increasingly, it seems that triple-A devs are focusing on visual fidelity and the frame-rate arms race over local multiplayer.

But despite this shift, my sofa is hosting more multiplayer showdowns than ever, and it's thanks to the indie developers that have embraced face-to-face rivalry and co-operation. Towerfall is the obvious example, a staple of the lunchtime gaming sessions at GM Towers, but it's far from the only contender. Samurai Gunn, Gang Beasts, Crawl, and Penarium all deliver something that can't quite be captured in an online environment.

All of which is to say: don't despair. Although it can sometimes feel as though the gaming experiences I crave are being overlooked by big studios, when I look a little closer I find a raft of independent developers carrying the torch. I would go on, but it's lunchtime in the GM offices, so I'm off to trade arrows with the team. ■

"MARIO KART AND ROCK BAND BROUGHT US TOGETHER"

STATS MAGIC The gaming month in facts and figures

100+

PlayStation VR prototypes developed by Sony before settling on The Deep, VR Luge, and London Heist.

79

Price, in pence, of Metal Gear Solid V's new horse armour DLC. As functionally useless as it is odd.

1,600+

Placeable objects in Halo 5: Guardian's 'Forge', its extensive custom map creator. The team at 343 Industries says its goal is to give the community "more power and control than ever before".

GM MOST WANTED

What's most tickling the team's fancy this month



MATT'S PICK...

Ghost Recon: Wildlands



With Destiny proving that hybridised MMO stylings can work alongside gratifying shooting, I'm all up for a more relatably tactile affair. Remember the Gunsmith mode from Future Soldier? Imagine that, but wrapped up in a cartel-infused, hyper stylised, four player drug busting raid. This is on my radar in a big way.

PS4, XO, PC – Winter 2016

ROBIN'S PICK...

Dragon's Dogma: Dark Arisen



I missed the boat on the original game (shameful confession time: I never owned a 360 or a PS3), but I've long found the chatter about its class-switching, monster-climbing, and shareable AI companions intriguing. This shiny rerelease coming to PC seems like the perfect opportunity for me to finally jump in and try it out for myself.

PC – January 2016

SAM'S PICK...

Rainbow Six Siege



While Call Of Duty has evolved into futuristic narratives full of cyborgs and robots, the good news for old timers like me is that Rainbow Six Siege looks to be a much more traditional take on the first person shooter. Tactical and strategic, with an emphasis on stealth – that's my bag, and this looks set to deliver. Single bullet takedowns, yeah!

PS4, XO, PC – 1 December

Here's everything you get in the starter set – enough stuff for you and a mate to get racing together.



TRACK TO THE FUTURE



A death race in your living room with Anki Overdrive

We may spend our working day writing about videogames, but that doesn't make us big kids. Booking a meeting room so that we can spend all afternoon playing with toy cars makes us big kids. But these aren't just any toy cars – this is Anki Overdrive, a brilliantly high-tech racing experience that makes our old Scalextric set look like a pile of dusty old nonsense.

This follow-up to Anki Drive (loyal fans will remember us having a crack at that back in GM286!) sees you racing or battling your friends with AI-directed cars. Their path round the track is handled automatically, by a process that might as well be magic, but through the smartphone game (now compatible with both iOS and Android) each player controls their vehicle's speed, lane position, and, most importantly, arsenal of deadly weaponry. Lining up behind a foe, sucking them in with your tractor beam, and shutting them down with a plasma cannon blast is a satisfaction on par with getting that perfect green shell hit in a certain other violent racer.

Car wars

One of the big differences this time around is that you now build your own custom tracks out of interlocking pieces. It does make set-up that bit more fiddly – we predict plenty of frustration-filled Christmas mornings this year – but the near-endless variety it enables makes up for it. The cars themselves are slicker than ever, both more stylish to look at and steadier on the track, and the app has received an impressive overhaul, adding more depth to both the single- and multiplayer experience.

At £150 for the starter set, it's not cheap, and the delicate pieces make it unsuitable for the younger children who might have found it most exciting, but this really is a unique and startlingly futuristic experience. With tech like this around, Team GM may never grow up. ■

"SUCKING A FOE IN WITH YOUR TRACTOR BEAM AND HITTING THEM WITH A PLASMA CANNON BLAST"

The Burning Question

What videogame vehicle would you love to have in real life?



Mario's kart
Equipped with bananas and red shells – I'd have some fun on the M25!
Samuel Hamilton, Facebook



Genki's Manapult
Driving around, sucking people up and firing them out into the sky. Sounds awesome to me!
Adam Hing, Facebook

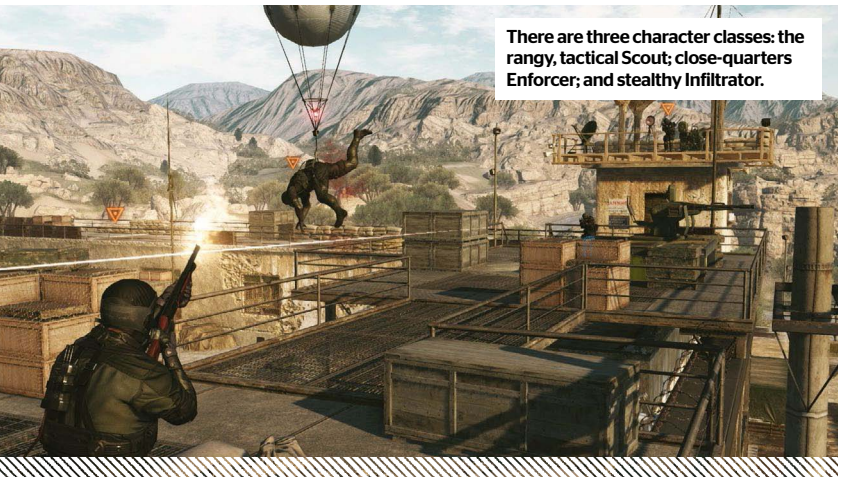
Visit www.facebook.com/officialgamesmaster and www.twitter.com/gamesmaster to take part in next issue's burning questions.











There are three character classes: the rangy, tactical Scout; close-quarters Enforcer; and stealthy Infiltrator.



Want to enjoy it like a proper MGS? You'll have play with trusted friends, like toddlers re-enacting war in the garden.

NEW SKINS FOR SNAKE

Metal Gear Online kept us waiting, but was it worth it?

Even after 60 hours, MGS still has the power to surprise and amuse. Metal Gear Online is that core concept, crafted into a wholly separate online component – with varying success.

It's competitive, team-based PvP, coloured by the daft, deft touches which define the series. There are three modes: in Bounty Hunter, you have to extract enemies – the more kills they have, the greater their value; Comm Control is basic capture and hold PvP, with attackers nabbing comm links to download intel; finally, in Cloak And Dagger, the attacking team attempts to nab packages from the defenders using stealth camouflage and non-lethal weapons. It's the most Metal Gear-y of the modes, if only because it actually forces clandestine play.

Snazzy ideas, then, but full of minor irritations. You can't change your soldier class once you start – choose an Enforcer at the outset, and then later get the urge to switch to Scout, and you'll have to make an entirely new character. More problematically, it rarely rewards stealth. Like many online games built around sneaking, players find shortcuts which remove the need to spend time crouching in bushes. In practice, you usually end up shooting everything that moves.

This leads to a jabbing sense that we didn't really need Metal Gear Online, and speculation about some dusty, theoretical Konami exec demanding a multiplayer component. Truthfully, the immaculate stealth of Metal Gear Solid V's single player is a better fit for anyone prioritising subterfuge over shootouts. ■

The Burning Question

What's the worst thing to ever happen to you in multiplayer?

Evil medics
In BF2, being killed and revived by my team repeatedly for points.
Tony Wealsby, Facebook

x-ray sniper
Being shot through a wall from the other side of the map three times in a row.
Adam Hing, Facebook

Visit www.facebook.com/officialgamesmaster and www.twitter.com/gamesmaster to take part in next issue's burning questions.

"PLAYER SHORTCUTS MEAN THAT YOU USUALLY END UP SHOOTING EVERYTHING THAT MOVES."



CHICKEN RUN

Sony Worldwide Studios boss Shuhei Yoshida has indulged in a fine British tradition, taking time out of his busy schedule to step out for a cheeky Nando's while he was visiting Shoreditch on business. He even tweeted images of his visit for posterity, and our sources confirm that Yoshida's visit also included top bants. What a lad.



MANKIND UNITED

Last issue, we reported on Square Enix promising to release Deus Ex: Mankind Divided early if enough eager beavers pre-ordered. Fans weren't delighted at being held to ransom, and the plan has sensibly been ditched after 'a resounding amount of negative fan feedback'.



RIDE ON MASS

Our galaxy-exploring dreams are one step closer, as EA has announced a Mass Effect ride at US theme park California's Great America. It's described as a '4D holographic attraction', which is tosh, but motion seating, 3D glasses, and an on-board actor should sell the illusion.

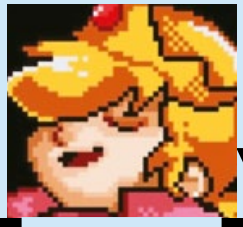


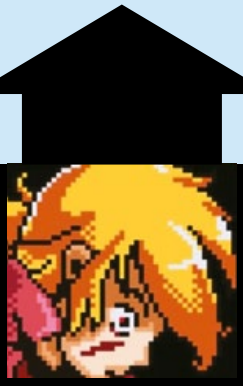
SHU HEARTS

Sony exec and peri-peri enthusiast Shuhei Yoshida has brought joy to our shrivelled old hearts by saying that the publisher would 'absolutely' work with From Software again. The two last collaborated on Bloodborne, a Miyazaki side-project that seemed a little risky for the studio to publish alone. Here's hoping for another grisly diversion to come.

Topping the leaderboard this issue

YOU WIN





YOU LOSE

No, we don't want to continue thanks



BLOPS DROPS

Although COD Black Ops III hits PS3 and 360 as well as current-gen consoles, Activision has announced that these anachronistic ports will lack any sort of campaign mode. Just the multiplayer and Zombies modes remain in these half-formed editions, but fortunately they will be available at a discounted price to soften the blow.



THE BIG CON

Konami has upped the ante on Metal Gear Solid V's microtransaction-heavy multiplayer by introducing an FOB Insurance Service, which protects your in-game base from infiltration... for real money. It's the digital equivalent of a mob shakedown: "Nice Forward Operating Base you've got here. It'd be a shame if anything happened to it..."

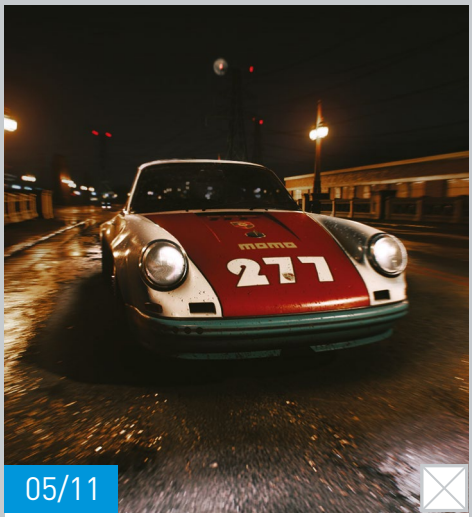


DANCE OFF

Bungie is turning to the medium of dance in its quest to discover new revenue streams for Destiny. The dev has introduced a microtransaction store offering 18 different emotes, all of which require new in-game currency Silver to purchase. Burn through your initial supply of free coins,and naturally you'll need to whip out your real credit card.

HASH IT OUT

The marketing team responsible for Call Of Duty: Black Ops III, not content with merely generating buzz, has decided to really terrify people. It rebranded the @CallOfDuty Twitter account to resemble a legitimate news source, and set about live-tweeting a fictional terrorist attack in Singapore – all to help promote a videogame. Tasteful.



05/11

SPEED IS GOOD

Zoom down to the shops for the release of shiny racer reboot Need For Speed.



06/11

OVERWATCH THIS SPACE

BlizzCon is here, and with it comes a wintry storm of gaming news from Blizzard.



10/11

APOCALYPSE NOW

A good day to hold a solemn funeral for your social life, obliterated by the arrival of Fallout 4.



19/11

FRONT AND CENTRE

Our childhood fantasies take on videogame form as Star Wars Battlefront hits shelves.

THE GM TO DO LIST

Crucial dates for your gaming diary. If you only do one thing this month, eat, but otherwise make a note of these events...



13/11

CROFTLY DOES IT

Get your tiny archaeology brushes ready – Rise Of The Tomb Raider is out now.



30/11

BARE NECESSITY

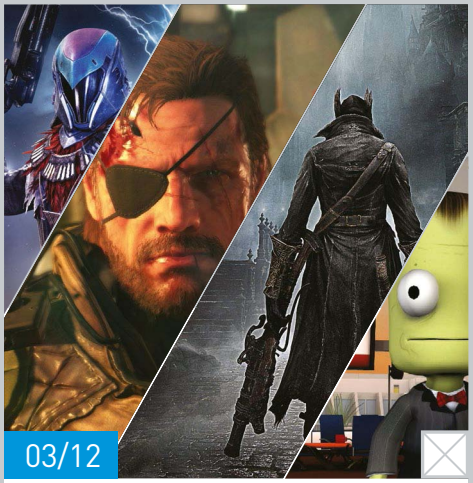
Time to finally shave off that slightly rubbish 'tache as Movember draws to a close.



01/12

THE BLAST OF US

Not enough explosions in your life? No probs! Grab yourself a copy of Just Cause 3 today.



03/12

PRIZE ABOVE

Roll out the red carpet for GamesMaster's spectacular awards issue, on sale now.

INCOMING

Six big releases headed to a format near you...

01



Battleborn
Format PS4, XO, PC
Out 9 February 2016

02



Deus Ex: Mankind Divided
Format PS4, XO, PC
Out 23 February 2016

03



Mirror's Edge Catalyst
Format PS4, XO, PC
Out 25 February 2016

04



Uncharted 4: A Thief's End
Format PS4
Out 18 March 2016

05



Street Fighter V
Format PS4, PC
Out Spring 2016

06



Quantum Break
Format XO
Out 5 April 2016

GamesMaster and GamesRadar+ clash in epic scrub-on-scrub combat – with expert commentary from **Matt Elliott**



This latest entry in the iconic series is designed for truly intricate, top-tier competition. It's filled with nuanced changes and varied characters, built so the most skilled players in the world can astonish and entertain. So of course we decided the best way to try it out was to throw a bunch of hopeless rookies in at the deep end.

With exclusive access to the latest build of Street Fighter V, we took two teams of lard-thumbed, lackwit button mashers – one from GamesMaster, one from our sister site GamesRadar+ – and handed each over to their own resident Street Fighter sensei. Could they be coached in the Way Of The Quarter Circle in a single afternoon? And, more importantly, could Team GamesMaster smash up their lah-di-dah online opponents and defend the mag's honour? Our wise master himself, Matt Elliott, has the answers...













VEGA
[LOUISE]



ZANGIEF
[TOM]

ROUND 3

ROUND 1





NECALLI
[BEN]

FINAL!





NASH
[ROBIN]

ROUND 2





RASHID
[LEON]

ROUND 4



M. BISON
[MATT SG]

Street Fighter V MEET THE TEAMS

GamesMaster



TRAINER: MATT ELLIOTT

Just as Ryu was born to wander this Earth like a martial arts bindlestiff, I was destined to fall in love with Street Fighter II at an arcade in Cromer. Since then, I've dedicated an embarrassing amount of my life to repeatedly performing the same two moves with Guile. It's surely this sense of pathological dedication that led GamesMaster to choose me to be sensei of their team.









NAME: MATT SAKURAOKA-GILMAN
CHARACTER: M. BISON

There are three reasons I chose the Shadaloo dictator for Matt Gilman: firstly, they're both maniacal dictators obsessed with gaining power at any cost. Secondly, there's something pleasing about pretending the 'M' stands for 'Matthew'. Thirdly, it establishes a creeping rivalry between Matt and Robin, who's playing as Nash: Bison killed him, he came back from the dead to take his revenge; it's all very much like their relationship on the magazine's deadline day.



NAME: ROBIN VALENTINE
CHARACTER: NASH

The team's production editor has an impeccable sense of justice, so I gave him Nash – an unholy Frankenstein's revenant, out to punish the wrongs committed against him. Robin's also a bit tasty at fighting games, and in skilled hands Nash is lethal. That's right, I basically enlisted a ringer! Other reasons for selection include the gentle suggestion of a GamesMaster coup d'état; and Robin's clear, jealous admiration of the character's physics-defying hairdo.



NAME: BEN GRIFFIN
CHARACTER: NECALLI

Regular GamesMaster contributor Ben is a riddle wearing mystery pyjamas inside an enigmatic sleeping bag. He collects furry animals, and drinks tea out of saucepans. Because he's all mysterious and that, I gave him Necalli; a wild, random, and dangerous fighter, like opening a cupboard overstuffed with punches. It's a choice that will make the most of Ben's unpredictability. Also: like Necalli, his everyday appearance hides his terrifying True Form. Few have witnessed it and lived.

gamesradar+



TRAINER: DAVE HOUGHTON

1992. December. Boxing Day. 24 hours earlier Dave received the life-changing gift of a SNES, and had already decided that £65 of his Christmas money was going on Street Fighter II. It was expensive, but Dave didn't care. He knew it would be a long-term deal. What he *didn't* know was that 'long-term' meant 'still an obsessive, ever-evolving love 23 years later'. Or that he'd end up training this lot.









NAME: LEON HURLEY
CHARACTER: RASHID

Leon sat down with Dave, and started taking technical theory notes – literally, in an actual notebook – like an absolute pro. Leon's solid range of skills was immediately striking: measured blocks, deft retaliation, and smart anti-air defense. Dave decided that he would be most qualified to handle someone nippy and versatile, and new boy Rashid embodies these qualities perfectly. He's faster than a buttered weasel, and is the only character with two different V-Skills – in Leon's hands, he's one to watch.



NAME: LOUISE BLAIN
CHARACTER: VEGA

Louise's choice of character was determined by two factors: her insistence that she didn't play as a girl, and her assertion that performing specials was 'like trying to crack a safe'. Because of this, Dave chose a character with decent power, speed, safety options, and a big, stupid cheaty claw. She picked up an excellent feel for anti-air attacks and keep away defence, largely thanks to Vega's Big Ass Kicks and preposterous range. He's currently one of the most over-powered characters in SFV – it's a solid pairing.



NAME: TOM STONE
CHARACTER: ZANGIEF

With Tom, Dave threw around a few archetypal character options, but he came alive at the mention of 'great big beefy bloke'. Tom also has a beard, so the Russian Cyclone seemed like the only sensible option. Dave gave him a run-through of the importance of advancing pressure, and 'Gief's new tools for creating that. He took to Zangief's V-Skill Iron Muscle and Lariat immediately – two meaty tools for shepherding an opponent into the corner for a crushing.

IN THE DOJO



My training methods are built upon simple foundations: a solid understanding of the game's basics, and the threat of physical violence (anyone who loses receives four consecutive Chinese burns). For the first 10 minutes, Team GM aren't allowed to touch the controllers. That's a right which must be earned. Instead, I explain how Street Fighter V's systems work.

The new V-Gauge represents a significant shift in pace: instead of turtling up and waiting for an opening, you're encouraged to press advantages hard. Repeatedly using your V-Skill, executed by pressing both medium attacks together, quickly builds the V-Gauge, allowing you to execute your powerful V-Trigger. Crucially, the meter resets after every round, so it's important not to waste it. Doing so is a one Chinese burn offence.

When we finally start playing, we establish some useful specials for each player. Nash can throw achingly slow Sonic Booms, then close in to deliver crushing kicks or a rapid command throw which regains some of his health. Because Robin is secretly great at fighting games, he masters both of these immediately. Very handy. Matt Gilman, however, struggles with Bison's charge attacks – probably because we're playing on controllers, rather than fight sticks. We focus instead on turning him into a defensive rock, relying on Bison's rangy kicks and useful V-Skill, which hurls fireballs back at enemies with gleeful effectiveness. Before long, Robin and Matt are having solid, tactical matches. Ace.

Ben's Necalli is more problematic. He shows furious flashes of promise, but we struggle to integrate his specials. Necalli's V-Skill, a variable-range ground pound, feels too slow to use on its own. When he attacks relentlessly it works, but I'm worried he's our weak link.

There are a few basics left to master: the classic Street Fighter left-right of jumping attack followed by a low sweep, and, perhaps more importantly, *blocking it*. Pleasingly, they quickly master these fundamental skills. Robin starts chaining together handsome combos, Gilman deftly deflects them. Ben discovers two miserably effective moves – a stabbing dive kick, and a low sweep which seems to baffle everyone. Best of all, because Ben has the moral qualities of a vaudeville ruffian, he's happy to spam this move in the squalid pursuit of victory. I've never been prouder. Also: I secretly hope Team GamesRadar+ haven't learned how to block.



Originally the plan was for the team to wrestle bears for practice, but HR put a stop to it. It's health and safety gone mad!





"BEN DISCOVERS TWO MISERABLY EFFECTIVE MOVES – A STABBING DIVE KICK, AND A LOW SWEEP WHICH SEEMS TO BAFFLE EVERYONE"



Very thoughtful of whatever mad scientist stiched Nash back together to transplant his bonkers hair onto his new scalp.

ROUND 1



ZANGIEF
[TOM]

VS

NECALLI
[BEN]



Good news: Team GamesRadar+ haven't learned how to block. Ben, who at one point looked like our glowing underbelly, has become a monster. He perfects Tom in their warm-up, thanks to relentless use of that filthy low kick. The humiliation has only begun. When their actual match starts, Zangief looks less comfortable than a bed full of biscuit crumbs. The big man can't shake off Necalli's relentless savagery, but it's the finish that truly amazes. Out of nowhere, Ben hits his Critical Art, bludgeoning his foe for a worthy victory. As with everything Ben, there's no middle ground: lazy low blows one moment, sublime smackdowns the next.



ROUND 2



NASH
[ROBIN]

VS

RASHID
[LEON]



It's quite even to begin with. Robin opens with a barrage of Sonic Booms, but Leon's effective use of Rashid's mobility means that we have a proper contest on our hands. Robin hits a combo ending with Nash's flashy command throw. It recovers a chunk of his life, but only serves to enrage Leon, who hammers him with a selection of dancing kicks. It looks like Rashid's going to score a huge turnaround victory, when Robin smashes him with an EX Sonic Boom. Luckily for Team GM, Leon forgets all his moves in the second round, and Robin batters him like an atlantic cod. It's another rock-solid win for Team GM.



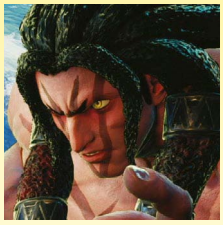
ROUND 3



VEGA
[LOUISE]

VS

NECALLI
[BEN]



Louise is the only one left on Team GamesRadar+. Diligent teacher that I am, I spied on her training so I could prepare Ben. She's looking good. The first round belongs to Ben's low sweep, which he hits *eight* times in a row. Louise comes back viciously, pushing back with some rangy claw attacks, and nailing Vega's diving attack to great effect. Ben has a full V-Gauge, but refuses to use it. Instead, he tries his Critical Art... which he whiffs horribly. It looks like a deserved victory for Louise until Ben finishes her with – you guessed it – a low sweep. It's a victory, then, but post-match Chinese burns are nonetheless required.



ROUND 4



M. BISON
[MATT SG]

VS

NASH
[ROBIN]



"And when Team GamesMaster saw the breadth of their domain, they wept, for there were no more noobs to pwn." Having literally run out of GamesRadar+ oiks to pummel, Team GamesMaster turns on itself. The first round is a cracker: Gilman bats back almost every Sonic Boom, and Robin varies his attacks magnificently. In the end, Nash edges it. In the second round, Gilman starts strong, but Robin pushes him back with some judicious projectiles. Matt's timing on the V-Skill seems to disappear, and it gets horribly tense. They both leap in for a finisher... and it's a double KO. Robin wins the match, but the war probably isn't over...













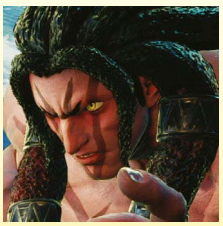
THE FINAL



NASH
[ROBIN]

VS

NECALLI
[BEN]



This is it. A GamesMaster-only final, between the unstoppable force and the actually-good-at-fighting-games object. Robin pulls off some amazing moves in the first round, sneakily teleporting behind his opponent with his V-Skill and hitting an explosive EX Sonic Boom, but Ben is learning. He's become worryingly good at actually blocking attacks, and even chucks in some experimental light punches before his trademark sweep. True to form, Ben wins the first round with his low kick. The second round shows how Nash is meant to be played. Robin takes a few blows early on, but becomes impossible to hit, dashing in for the life-regaining command throw, then teleporting behind Ben for a combo. It's the final round of the final match, and Robin looks like he's in control. Ben's having none of it, though. He goes full rushdown, staying close to Nash the entire round, knocking him out of the air when he jumps in, even interrupting his command throw. In the end, victory belongs firmly to Ben's low kick. Given the sense of occasion, I forgo the necessary Chinese burns, and we celebrate: Team GamesRadar+ has been utterly devoured, and that's what matters.

BONUS MATCH



R. MIKA
[MATT E]

VS

KARIN
[DAVE]



It's time for a sensei face-off, like Mr Miyagi and the Cobra Kai bad guy from Karate Kid. I pick the embarassingly bouncy R. Mika, while Dave plumps for tittering heiress Karin. In the first round, I manage to keep him under control with a tricky drop kick that negates low sweeps, but he keeps hope alive with some smart jumping attacks. Dave is swinging it back when I connect with the EX version of Mika's anti-air special: a move which ends with a humiliating butt-splash to the face. Round two is even closer: I use my V-Trigger twice to call in my tag team partner, but it's not enough. Dave traps me in the corner and delivers palm-strike pudding. Everything rides on the final round. Once again, it belongs to Mika and her flying backside. We decide this should be a best-of-three decider. The first round of the second match is all Karin – despite nailing my V-Trigger *and* a Stone Cold Stunner V-Reversal, poor Mika gets flattened. The second round is desperately tight: Dave looks like he's going to snatch an equaliser, but I manage to nail Mika's EX Flying Peach – a move with zero startup, which also ends with demeaning combat rump. The final round comes, and I cheat: calling in Mika's tag team partner to begin a crunching heavy combo, before finishing with another EX Flying Peach. I hate myself for writing that, but hey, a win's a win.









THE VERDICT

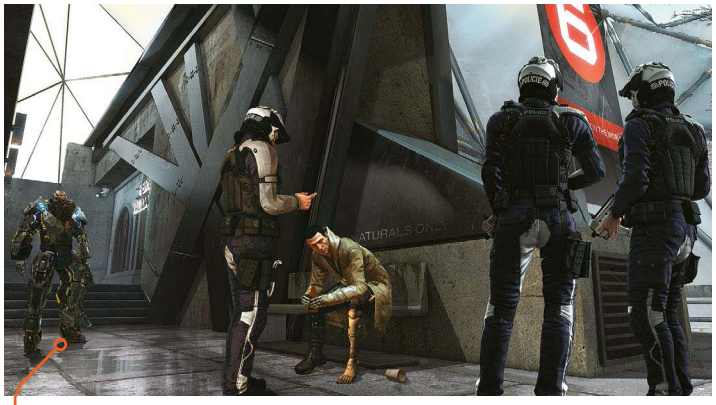
GamesMaster's victory is complete. It wasn't even close. When they played, even GamesRadar+'s *leader* was pushed to the wire by Ben, who has become more powerful than I ever dared imagine. (I may have created a monster, there.) There's a time and a place for being humble, and that place is over on GamesRadar+, now, where the wretched losers choke down their rotting humble pie. Warm glow of victory aside, our tournament proves that Street Fighter V is easier to grasp than we first imagined, but it's still staggeringly deep. As Ryu himself once observed: "You must defeat GamesMaster Sheng Long to stand a chance."

This guard has learned himself an important lesson: never laugh at Adam Jensen for wearing sunglasses indoors. He takes it very personally.

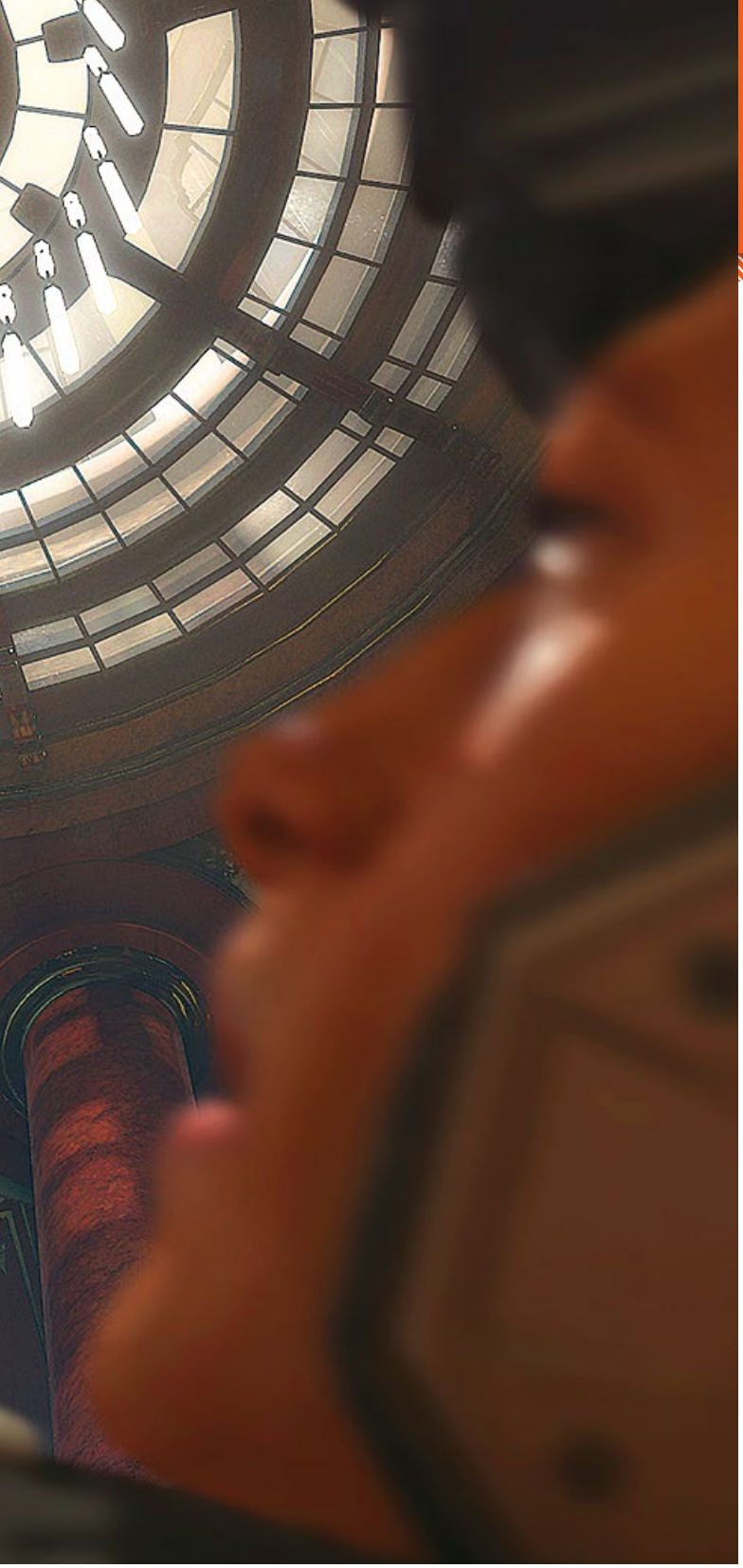
"JENSEN IS MORE GADGET THAN MAN NOW; HIS UNSCUFFABLE SHADES AND DESIGNER JACKETS HIDE AN ARMOURY"



Dubai is in tatters after the 'aug incident' at the end of Deus Ex: Human Revolution – but it's still a truly beautiful place to explore, thanks to the sequel's new engine.



The police mistrust and bully cybernetically-enhanced individuals, which certainly leads to some friction when they have to work with the auged-up Adam Jensen.



GM MOST WANTED

Format PS4, XO, PC **Publisher** Square Enix
Developer Eidos Montreal **ETA** 23 February 2016

DEUS EX: MANKIND DIVIDED

Gaming's grumpiest bionic commando is back

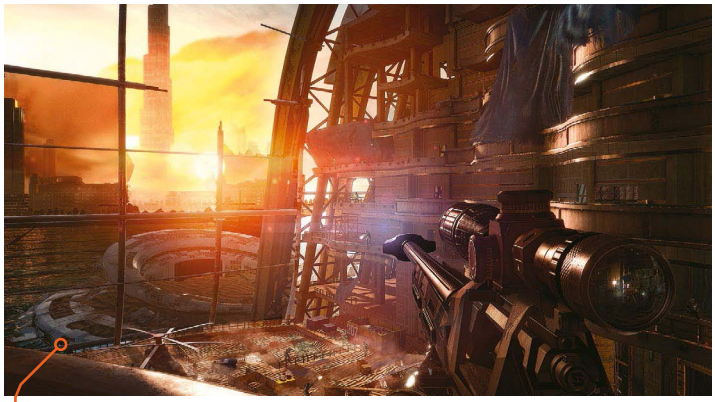
Human Revolution was very fond of its Icarus symbolism. Jensen's augmented form represented humanity's overreaching ambition to transcend through technology – but it doesn't really work when your hero has nothing to fear from the fall. The first thing we see Jensen do in Mankind Divided is throw himself out of a plane without a parachute pack.

He hurtles calmly towards the ground for a few moments, and then breaks his descent with a cushioning orb of electricity. If his new colleagues at Interpol are jealous, they don't show it. In fact, there's a definite note of contempt when his CO radios in to bark instructions. In the two years since the last game, the world has reacted badly to the virus that sent cyborgs into a murderous frenzy. 'Augs' who don't have Jensen's incredible killing abilities are second class citizens – some live in slums, while others, unable to get work, are driven to the criminal underworld. Whatever you did at the end of Human Revolution – Eidos Montreal is trying to keep the effects of that final decision ambiguous enough to make the story fit to your choice – Jensen is on the warpath. The Illuminati members responsible for this mess must be found and outed.

Jensen X

Dubai is the first new area of our playable demo, and we immediately notice that the gold filter of the last game is gone – the wrecked resort glows in the blazing sunshine. The first flurries of an incoming sandstorm whip plastic sheeting into the air, and rubble lies all around. Mankind Divided uses a heavily altered version of Hitman's Dawn engine, which means a huge leap in detail, and a lot of the clutter can be picked up and thrown to distract foes – a real improvement in a series that's all about finding creative ways to use your abilities and the environment to reach your target.

"Artistically, we're doing new stuff with this engine," gameplay director Patrick Fortier explains. "We have this team, we



The sniper scope marks enemies so you can track them. That's especially useful here – a desert sandstorm is about to blow in and obscure everything.



It's hard not to feel sorry for the guards of Mankind Divided. Chatting about the footie one minute, electrocuted by an invisible metal assassin the next.

Going commando

Jensen's fanciest new gadgets revealed

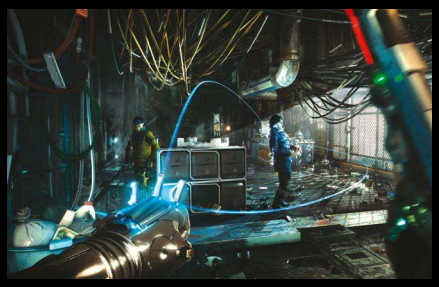
Dash

By unleashing his stored electrical energy, Jensen can propel himself forward at great speed. It's an easy way to instantly reach ledges, but can also be used offensively. Hit a guard with it and they're done.



Taser

Jensen's hands can fire up to four electric shock charges. By holding down the fire trigger and moving over targets, you can lock on before stunning multiple enemies at once. Great for non-lethal players.



Shield

Jensen can deploy a crystalline nano-shell at a moment's notice. Dubbed the Titan Shield, it can deflect bullets, and basically turns you into an unstoppable walking tank...as long as your batteries hold out.



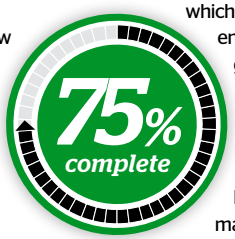
Vision

Jensen's augmented vision mode can see through walls, which is obviously useful, but it can also reveal what items guards are carrying. It's perfect if you're searching for a particular keycard.



have the experience, and people are really motivated to revisit it and take it to the next level, gameplay-wise. There's also the cover system, which is something we wanted to refine – it dramatically changes the way that you navigate through the map."

As in Human Revolution, crouching behind things pops you into third-person, and you can now dash five or six metres in any direction from cover. This is great for moving between spots of safety, but like many things in the game, it has offensive uses too. If a guard turns his back, you can quickly dart out and get rid of him with a close-combat move. These brutal takedowns also play out in third-person – non-lethal variants have Jensen KO guards with combo-punches and headbuts; lethal versions see him unsheathe his hidden blades and dice up foes. Grim, but satisfying.



Human evolution

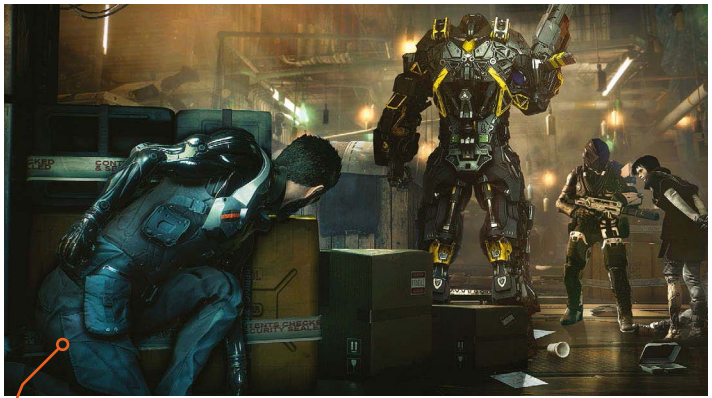
Our hero is more gadget than man now; his unscuffable shades and designer jackets hide an armoury. Within his hands are those retractable robo-swords, which can now be fired at enemies. His forearm hides a gun that can throw foes back with a non-lethal concussive blast. His knuckles fire homing tasers that can incapacitate humans and paralyse machines. He's pretty good at punching, too. The perfect protagonist for a first-person sandbox shooter – truly a living weapon. But will you use him to kill, or incapacitate?

That's a more interesting question in Mankind Divided than it was in the last game. A non-lethal approach in Human Revolution limited your options – the explosive Typhoon takedown was strictly off-limits, as were the most impressive weapons. In Mankind Divided, the Typhoon can be tweaked to deliver gas bombs instead of warheads, and you can change your gun's ammo type on the fly. Most of Jensen's abilities can be used in multiple ways, or changed functionally to deliver different effects. His blades, for example, can be fired to distract, pin a guard to a wall, or – after a brief charge-up – cause an explosion.

"THE TYPHOON SYSTEM CAN BE TWEAKED TO DELIVER GAS BOMBS INSTEAD OF WARHEADS"



In Human Revolution the strict energy limits meant you'd rarely see those abilities. In Mankind Divided, you're able to be much more extravagant, using multiple abilities at the same time or in combination to creatively dismantle guard patterns. An electric dash – our favourite of his new abilities – works nicely with the silent movement augmentation, speeding up stealth considerably. Alternatively, we had success using it to zip into the middle of



The authorities don't trust augmentations, but big mech suits you can climb into are just dandy. You'll need some armour-piercing ammo to take them out.





You can view and customise your weapon with a button press to change ammo types, or add laser targeting, scopes, or silencers.

There are multiple paths through each level – if you can reach this rooftop, for example, you can steal a sniper rifle to gain a deadly advantage.

These robot walkers are a throwback to the original 1997 Deus Ex. It takes a lot to bring them down, so be sure to bring plenty of explosives with you.

a crowd of guards – the best place to unleash a Typhoon blast.

Ex machina

Jensen's mission in Dubai is to protect an informant and infiltrate an arms deal – and there's an optional objective to destroy a communication device, to help protect the snitch's cover. If you breeze past it, the deal can turn out very differently – when things go wrong and the shooting start, your actions will determine if the informant is killed in the crossfire. The game will have a lot of branching points like this, each affecting the flow of the plot.

"The story did adapt [in Human Revolution]," says narrative director Mary DeMarle. "There were key moments that things changed or came back – but it was still a largely linear kind of experience. So in this game we really wanted to push that narratively; we wanted the story to change, and we wanted to embrace that."

Mankind Divided's new engine gives Eidos Montreal more ways to tell the story. You can still hack into emails and read newspads, but these are backed up by full-length TV news reports, graffiti, eavesdropping opportunities, and more. From Dubai to Prague and beyond, it promises to give us the most varied and detailed insight into the Deus Ex universe yet. We can't wait to explore this broken society, and all the beautiful, deadly technology it contains. ■ ***Tom Senior***

GM Instant Reaction

+ Smart alterations to the augmentation and energy systems promise to fix Human Revolution's biggest problems.

– We haven't seen much of the new conversation systems. Hopefully the conspiracy-laden story won't be too convoluted.

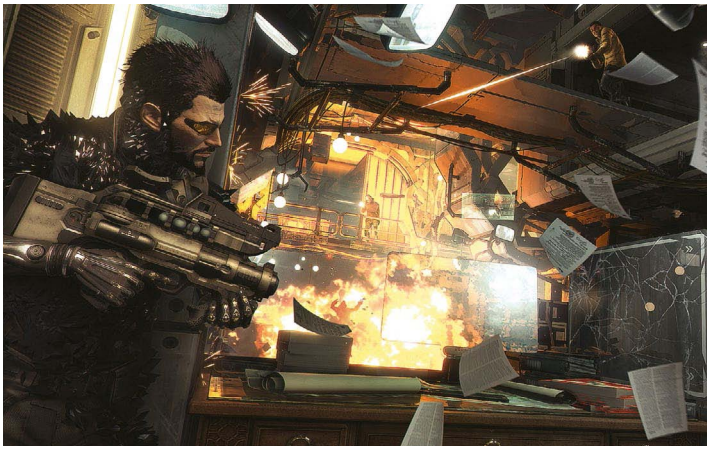
THRILL-O-METER

1 2 3 4 5

This sandbox sequel looks and feels seriously augmented.



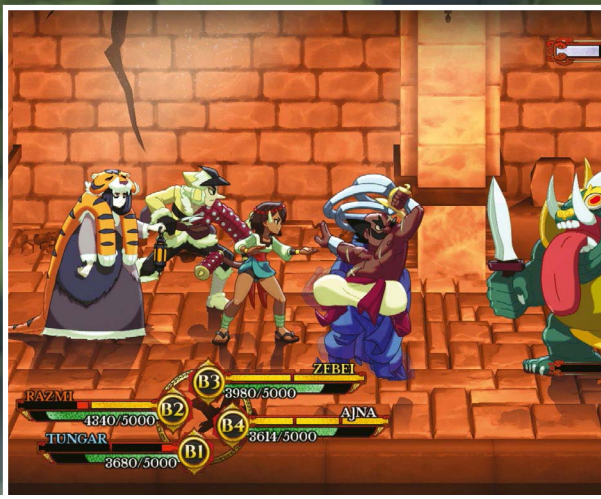
After a long mission, Jensen like nothing better than kicking back with a glass of whisky and watching 25 television sets at the same time, Ozymandias-style.



Format PS4, XO, PC **Publisher** 505 Games **Developer** Lab Zero **ETA** January 2018

INDIVISIBLE

Gorgeous Metroidvania action from the creators of Skullgirls



Crowdfunding may be at something of a low ebb in terms of its reputation among gamers, but if there's one front the Kickstarter revolution continues to deliver on, it's establishing demand for niche propositions. And Lab Zero's latest – a 2D Metroidvania that fuses RPG combat with fighting game combos – certainly seems to fit that particular bill.

Rather than expecting potential players to shell out on the basis of little more than a portfolio of promises and a slick video, the studio has put together a playable prototype of its nascent project, which is freely available for anyone to download and try. And while the word 'prototype' might evoke images of unfinished textures and janky mechanics, Indivisible is already offering slick combat and incredible 2D visuals.

Take spunky protagonist Ajna, for instance, an agile tomboy whose jaunty platforming is already animated with remarkable flair. Even at this early stage, hopping across ledges is a pleasure, and her surroundings are rich in painterly detal. But it's in the battle system that Lab Zero – best known for its work on Skullgirls – has served up its wildest innovations.

Rise of the Valkyrie

We quiz the studio's CEO Peter Bartholow about the genesis of the idiosyncratic combat, and he explains the team's rather unlikely source of inspiration: a classic 1999 RPG on the original PlayStation. "Like in Valkyrie Profile, in Indivisible your RPG party functions a bit like a single, customisable fighting game character." Bartholow explains. "So this sort of combat is a particularly good fit for us, and we're using our fighting game background to give players greater attack variety and strategic

"ANJA BOASTS THE ABILITY TO ABSORB OTHERS INTO HER BEING AND SUMMON THEM TO BATTLE ALONGSIDE HER"



Indivisible may look lovely in screenshots, but Lab Zero's strength in 2D animation ensures that it's even more striking in motion.



Although stats play their part, quickfire combos are definitely the focus of Indivisible's battle system.

20% complete

options." In practice, the system sees each party member mapped to a face button, and encourages players to create spectacular combos by stringing together attacks from each of the lovingly-animated heroes. "While stats and spells come into it, the focus is on delivering something that feels fast, fun, and rewards mastering your characters' attacks."

The genre-splicing doesn't end there, though. "In addition to your party effectively functioning like a fighting game character, we're handling magic similar to fighting game supers," continues Bartholow. "There's a super meter that's a shared party resource for both offense and defence. Not only does it let Ajna and her party members unleash powerful spells and attacks, it also fuels defense. Blocking requires meter to use, but you'll get more back if you time your defence well." So, while blind button-bashing may create some pretty pyrotechnics, it'll see your group cut down quicker than a fir tree in December.

Fighting fit

Your range of tactical options will only increase as the game goes on – Ajna boasts the ability to absorb other individuals into her being and summon them to battle alongside her, providing advantages both in and out of battle. "As you progress through the game and fuse with more party members, Ajna will be able to manifest new weapons. In addition to their powers in battle, every one will have multiple uses in environment traversal and exploration, too. For example, in the prototype, once Ajna finds the axe, she can cut through vine barriers, but also strike walls and pull herself up to scale them. So that's where the Metroidvania influences come in."

The exploration isn't quite as developed as the combat right now, but given that Lab Zero is targeting a January 2018 release, the studio has plenty of time to flesh things out. And although that may seem like a long wait, backers won't be left to twiddle their thumbs for two years, since the dev plans to continually update the prototype with new dungeons, characters, and enemies for players to try out and give feedback on.

So what happens if Lab Zero's funding goal isn't reached? Well, Indivisible simply won't get made. So, if this indie charmer has you all aquiver, you'd best head on over to the Indiegogo page and show it your support. ■ ***James Nouch***

GM Instant Reaction

+ It's just so gosh-darn pretty. The crisp 2D art looks fantastic in stills, but it's almost peerless in motion.

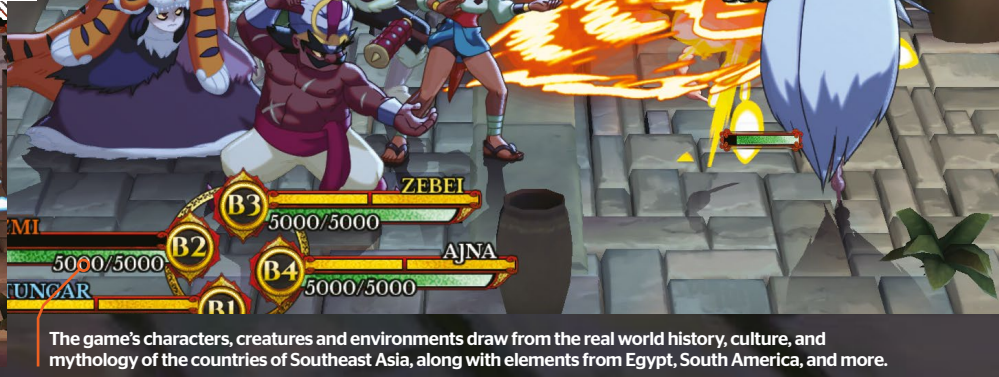
– 2018 is a heckuva long way off, and there's no guarantee the developer will be able to raise the full funds it needs.

THRILL-O-METER

1 2 3 4 5

We'd love to see this funded – help it out at http://bit.ly/gmindivisible

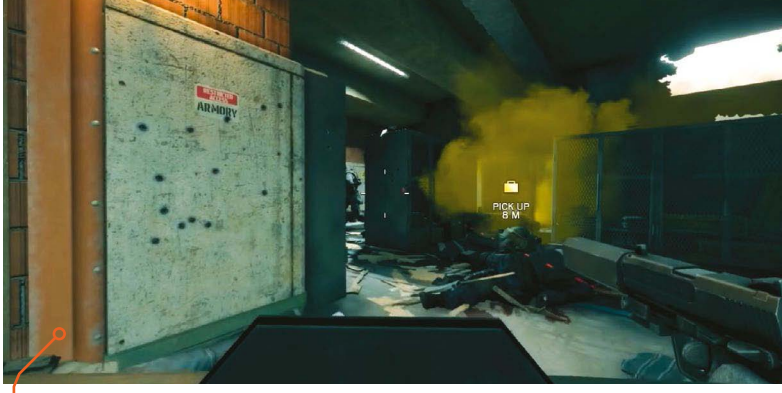




The game's characters, creatures and environments draw from the real world history, culture, and mythology of the countries of Southeast Asia, along with elements from Egypt, South America, and more.



No offence guys, but 'Rainbow Six' is about as intimidating a team name as 'The Butterfly Bunch'.



Time to go pick up that defuser. And inhale a bunch of noxious gas, apparently. It's not all glamorous, being a terrorist-hunting, door-kicking badass.



You can reinforce walls to stop the enemy from blasting their way in.





GM Instant Reaction

+ Searching for enemies is brilliantly tense, with a thicker atmosphere than even most horror games manage.

− In the midst of battle, it can be frustratingly difficult to tell friend from foe – time to invest in rainbow-coloured uniforms?

THRILL-O-METER

1 2 3 4 5

The tactical shooter's comeback is looking better every time we see it.





Realism hasn't gotten in the way of making fun classes – Doc can shoot teammates with a healing gun, and Fuze can lay some preposterously explosive wall traps.

Format PS4, XO, PC **Publisher** Ubisoft
Developer Ubisoft Montreal **ETA** 1 December

RAINBOW SIX SIEGE

The darkest game with 'rainbow' in the title you'll play this year

No respawns, no cover – this isn't a shooter for those who value brawn over brains. We've enjoyed what we've seen of Siege before, but were in desperate need of some training – that's where the new solo missions come in.

Cold Zero is a hostage rescue from a group of fanatical terrorists, while Tubular Assault has you clearing hijackers from a plane. Both must be done single-handedly, with no extra health, making these 'tutorials' tougher than most game's main campaigns. Good. They're the perfect intro to this tense tactical FPS.

PvP has been refined nicely post-beta. The defending terrorist team holds the objective, and can set up barricades and booby traps. Meanwhile, the attackers send in remote drones to seek them out, in a sobering glimpse at the future of Amazon Prime warfare.

Six gun

But despite adjustments, the odds still initially feel weighted too far in the attacking team's favour – they're free to abuse every entry point, while defenders are forced to stay put to defend their hostage or bombs from rescue or defusal respectively.

The new maps are feasts of decoy potential, however. You're free to set up barricades that hide nothing but red herrings, or pose for drone snaps on the plane's top floor, leading the attacking team on a wild goose chase while your hostage is held elsewhere. If defenders survive the full round time, it's victory, leading to tense ticking clock-watching that'd make Jack Bauer proud. ■ ***Tom Stone***

90% complete

SHOGUN BROS.

ensense

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((surround max)) TECHNOLOGY OPTIMIZED FOR BEST PRO GAMING ATMOSPHERE

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EXTREME COOL OUTLOOK
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commander series

PC GAMER EDITOR'S CHOICE ★★★★★

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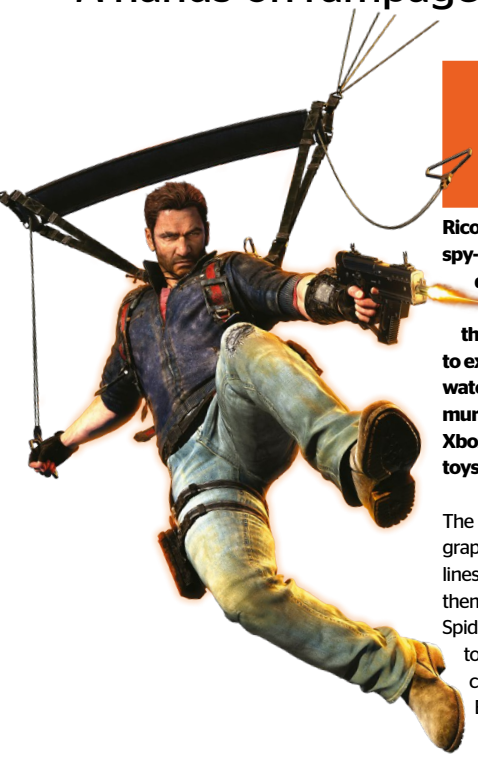


Asynchronous multiplayer continuously compares records with friends. You can compete for the longest time spent in wingsuit mode, for instance.

Format PS4, XO, PC **Publisher** Square Enix **Developer** Avalanche Studios **ETA** 1 December

JUST CAUSE 3

A hands-on rampage with Rico – who's basically Spider-Man now



In a medium crowded by psycho killers surgically attached to firearms, is there a bigger sadist than Rico Rodriguez? Just Cause's spy-cum-saboteur-cum-assassin doesn't just shoot people: he drags them behind jets, he strings them up in trees, he attaches them to exploding gas canisters and watches them go "Argghh!". And the murderous Mexican's first outing on Xbox One and PS4 only offers more toys to play with.

The best of these fresh playthings is a grapple gun that fires four simultaneous lines. Since pressing LB/L1 now reels them in, you're essentially a stubbly Spider-Man who can tie groups of people to your hatchback's bumper like tin cans on a wedding car. Or stretch Wile E. Coyote traps across roads. Or precisely apply cables to a watchtower's load-bearing beams – then increase the tension in order to topple it. Hey, during a revolt against greedy General Di Ravello – a dictator who smothers his people in propaganda and sucks their money dry – no one says you can't tether some poor civilian sod's left leg to a car then their right leg to the ground and drive away very fast...

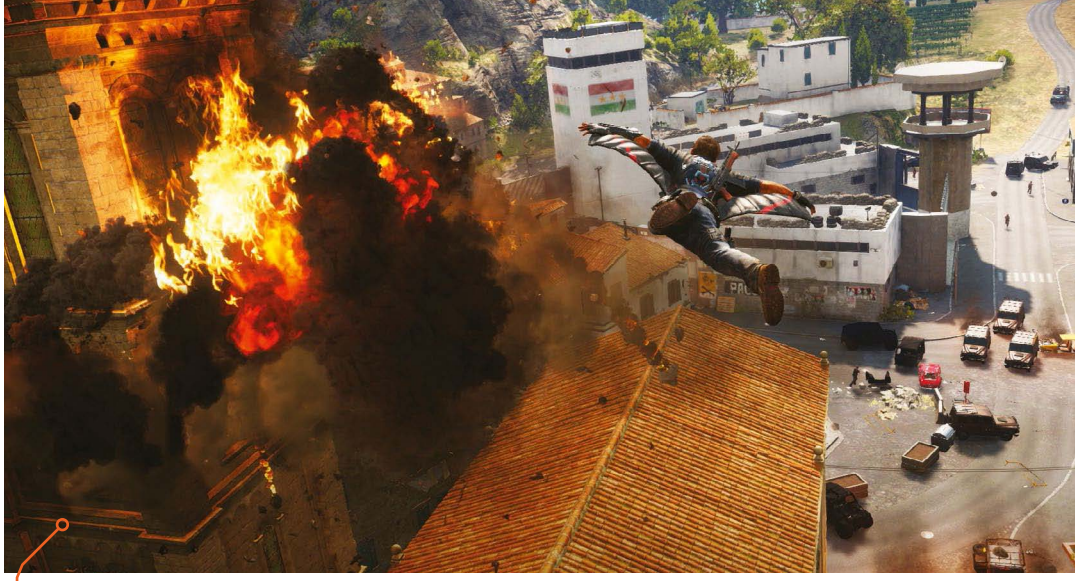
Winging it

The Mediterranean region of Medici hosts all this mayhem, mixing Spanish countrysides, French coastlines, and snow-capped Italian mountain ranges. It's big, beautiful, and fully explorable from the start. Good job you've got a wingsuit. Holding Y/Triangle to spread the flaps grants you almost indefinite air time provided you use the grapple wisely, maintaining momentum by pulling yourself towards the ground then using the acceleration to arch upwards. Considering you can freely switch between it and the parachute, it's also useful in sharply changing direction.

The two story missions we're given access to as part of this extended hands-on include Rico storming a village with the local militia. We hijack tanks and winch up gates to allow trucks to pass underneath, then race away under cover of night as the enemy cavalry gives chase. Tying an in-flight chopper to the ground never gets old, and even if it did, you've got Rebel Drops to customise the contents of support packages.

In the name of rigorous testing, our Square Enix handler unlocks everything for us, so we immediately go top shelf: twin shotguns, an RPG that fires a preposterous *five* grenades at once, a rapid-fire mortar, a laser that lets you call in airstrikes, and the most devastating

85% complete



Pressing down on the D-pad selects mines. The best bit? They never run out. It's another example of Just Cause 3's focus on maximum carnage over inventory micro-management. And of its baked-in disdain for all standing structures.





We set a waypoint on the opposite side of the map, and it takes us a good 15 minutes to get there by chopper.





Making stuff go boom never gets old, and is Just Cause 3's best hope of masking its less-than-stellar shooting model.



explosive in the game: the M488 FOW, which we reckon is only a few plutonium grams short of a full nuclear blast.

Vehicles plummet to Earth instantly: the likes of World War II spitfires, monster trucks, stunt bikes, jets, bombers, and a transport chopper the size of a small skyscraper all springing from crates in mint condition. Of course, normally you have to complete objectives to unlock them, the bulk of which centre on liberating regions by destroying billboards, monuments, and speakers blaring biased commentary. In a candy-coloured cliffside town, we fix one end of our grapple gun to a statue's arm, and the other to its groin, then pull it taut into an obscene gesture (never underestimate our supremely high-brow sense of humour) before winching its stone head onto our chopper... and using it as a wrecking ball.

Mettle gear

This unlocks challenges such as rampages, races, and one mode called Crash, which involves keeping your ride above a certain speed to prevent it from exploding. Apart from tough wingsuit courses in which you have to dive through a series of tight targets, sometimes inches off the ground, there's nothing particularly fresh here, but completing them earns you the right to go truly wild. Enter: Gear Mods.

Excelling at challenges enables equipment upgrades – for instance increasing the strength of your tether, bolting rocket-boosters to mines, giving grenades homing functionality or your wingsuit an airbrake, and even adding nitrous and bunny hops to all vehicles. (And that's anything from a yacht to a tractor.) They turn the game into an experimental physics sandbox, one in which you can tie soldiers to the ground, attach a booster, and make them spin round and round like a Catherine wheel. You know, if you want to.

The familiar issue of hollow gunplay remains, combat never feeling as satisfying as it should, but on this evidence the sheer number of ways you can tear across Medici – and through enemies – makes up for this potential flaw. Look out for our review, wingsuiting its way to you soon. ■ ***Ben Griffin***

"PRECISELY APPLY CABLES TO A WATCHTOWER'S LOAD-BEARING BEAMS – THEN INCREASE THE TENSION TO TOPPLE IT"

GM Instant Reaction

+ A wingsuit and up to four grapples at once expand the possibilities and turn the map into a glorious physics sandbox.

– Shooting still feels empty and unsatisfying, with combat played to a constant sound of tinny gunfire.

THRILL-O-METER

1 2 3 4 5

An arena for pure chaos might just balance out some soft bullet-play.



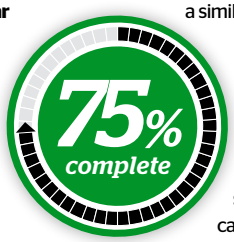
It wouldn't be an FF game without Chocobos... but it *might* do without Moogles. The furballs are still "under consideration".

Format PS4, XO **Publisher** Square Enix
Developer Square Enix **Out** Square Enix **ETA** Autumn 2016

FINAL FANTASY XV

For king and countryside

New info for this incredible-looking fantasy epic keeps trickling in at an agonisingly slow rate, and the wait is starting to take its toll on our sanity. Thankfully 2016 isn't that far away now, and we'll be that much closer to cocooning ourselves in Chocobo feathers, fishing for our lunch, and cruising along the coast with our quartet of bros in a beautiful classic convertible.



It's a good thing that the boys get to stop for some R&R every now and then, as it sounds like there's been a spot of bother brewing in their home city of Lucis. Over the past 15 years the kingdom has been locked in a bitter war with the Niflheim empire, and when things are finally starting to look up with a peace agreement in the works, it all falls apart.

Taking advantage of Lucis' lowered defences, Niflheim storms the city with its army of robotic soldiers and takes over. All of this happens while main protagonist Prince Noctis is away, trying to reach his childhood friend Lunafreya – the woman he's arranged to marry – in a similarly besieged city.

Family matters

It makes for a tense, emotional backdrop to the gang's road trip-style shenanigans. The world is set to be far darker than the camping holiday you might have thought it was from the demo we saw earlier this year.

Family is set to be an important theme, with a strong bond shown between Noctis and his dad, King Regis. While we're loathe to foretell disaster, it's safe to assume that you're going to need some tissues and a cuddly toy on standby for some gut-wrenching moments. ■ ***Daniella Lucas***

GM Instant Reaction

+ We've seen how huge the game's open world is already – and now we're promised the story chops to back it up.

– The drip-feed of info has gotten infuriatingly sluggish – why is Square Enix keeping everything so close to its chest?

THRILL-O-METER

1 2 3 4 5

2016 can't get here soon enough. Bring on the Chocobos!





The Final Fantasy series has a long history of excellent mini games, such as Blitzball or Tetra Master. XV follows that trend, letting you do a spot of fishing between fights.

Format PS4, PS Vita **Publisher** Square Enix
Developer Square Enix **ETA** Summer 2016

WORLD OF FINAL FANTASY

Big heads filled with big dreams

That peek at XV not enough to satisfy your hunger for Square's classic RPG series? Well maybe this mash-up morsel will keep you going. Featuring a host of characters and monsters from the games in an adorable chibi style, it sees siblings Reynn and Lann enter the realm of Grymoire to retrieve both their memories, and 'mirages'... whatever those are.

Why said adventure involves everyone getting genetically spliced with Funko toys hasn't yet been revealed. What we do know is that it allows you to stack a Moogle on top of your head – that's got to be a good thing, right?

World Of Final Fantasy is a celebration of the series, similar in approach to wonderful collect-a-thon/battler Record Keeper on mobile. And it's got the classic turn-based combat of FFVII-IX, which will come in handy with all of the fighting you'll be doing with your new friends.

Like a spiky-haired Pokémon spin-off, you'll collect various characters on your journey, and send them into battle against your enemies. You can also experiment by stacking your team on top of (or beneath) you to produce different effects, as well as switch between your normal and jumbo-headed forms. Sure, why not?

So far we've seen Cloud, the Warrior Of Light, and Lightning in chibi form, but we'd bet our best Black Chocobo that they're just the tip of the iceberg of classic characters. Famous summons will also make cameos, including Shiva, Ramuh, an adorably huggable Behemoth, and more.

Chibi Chiba

The cutesy art style is a clearly aimed attempt to bring in a younger audience, which seems at odds with the bucket-loads of nostalgic call-backs on show, and with a release set in relatively short order, for 2016, we're surprised Square is still holding so much info back. It does calm our nerves somewhat, that the project is in the steady hands of Hiroki Chiba, who's previously worked on more mature, story-driven series entries, including Type-0 and VIII. ■ ***Daniella Lucas***

65% complete



Look at how cute everything is! If Squeenix doesn't release a toy range, it's missing all the tricks.

GM Instant Reaction

+ Record Keeper handily proved that Square can pull off these kinds of series celebrations to great results.

– The story is all being kept a bit vague for our liking – it's not even been explained what a 'mirage' actually is yet.

THRILL-O-METER

1 2 3 4 5

A fun little treat for dedicated fans, but we don't see it making waves.







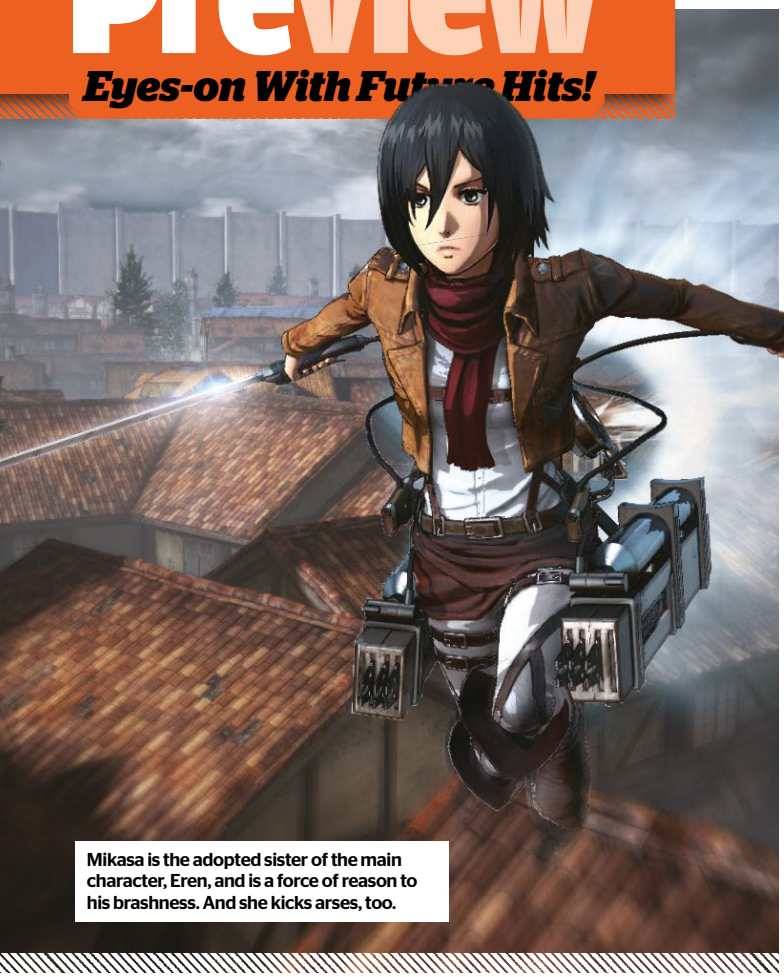




Your small form lets you ride on the back of monsters, while your large form lets them ride on you. So that seems all fair and equal, right?



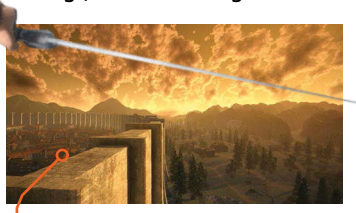
As well as meeting famous Final Fantasy characters and recruiting them into your party, you'll adventure and battle across classic locations from the series.



Mikasa is the adopted sister of the main character, Eren, and is a force of reason to his brashness. And she kicks arses, too.



Armin, the blonde dude on the left, is not the most capable of squaddies in the anime/manga, but he's a tactical genius. How will this translate into the game?



The only way to kill a Titan is to slice the nape of its neck with your twin blades.





GM Instant Reaction

+ The manoeuvrability afforded by the characters' wire-powered gear should translate perfectly into gameplay.

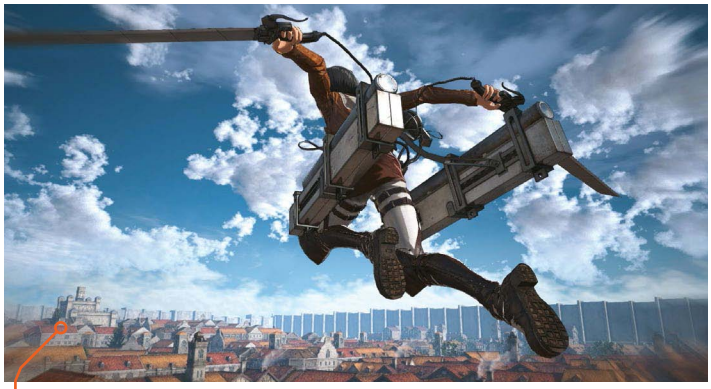
– How will the dev keep battling Titans interesting? What will we do outside of fights? Lots of unanswered questions...

THRILL-O-METER

1 2 3 4 5

Promising adaptation well worth keeping an eye on, we reckon.





The combat system, revolving around airborne traversal, is about as far from Omega Force's usual rehashing of Chinese peasantry-bashing as you could get.

Format PS4, PS Vita, PS3 **Publisher** Tecmo Koei
Developer Omega Force **ETA** Summer 2016

ATTACK ON TITAN

AKA Die-Nastily Warriors

About to eat lunch while reading this? Best make sure your tummy is settled, as the latest from Dynasty Warriors developer Omega Force brings the stomach-churning violence of the infamously grotesque anime and manga series to PlayStation. Don't worry, we'll still be here once you've polished off that sarnie.

All done? Good. So, for the uninitiated, Attack On Titan's brand of post-apocalypse comes in the form of gigantic humanoid monsters, the titular Titans. Some are grimly skinless, others just hauntingly nude with impossibly wide, toothy smiles. Standing as tall as skyscrapers, these giants feast on ordinary-sized humans' flesh, often nomming on them whole with a limb severing, bone crunching lack of table manners.

Based on the first season of the anime, which debuted in 2013 on western shores, the game pops you into the high-flying 3D Manoeuvre Gear suits of three protagonists – head-strong Eren, cool as an iced-cucumber Mikasa, and weak but wise strategist Armin – as you defend the last human settlement and its high city walls from the encroaching beasties.

85% complete

Massive attack

With a combat system wired to the high-speed air-traversal of the anime's action, we're hopeful that this could be a breakthrough tie-in – this kind of space-eating, Spider-Man-esque manoeuvrability is the stuff of gaming dreams. That it's Omega Force at the helm has us cautious, however, as this is not a team known for delivering combat finesse. That said, if Attack On Titan can tap into the show's hair-raising mix of body horror and fluid action: we're in. ■ ***Matt Sakuraoka-Gilman***



Dense rainforests, picturesque peaks, great lakes, and the world's largest salt flat can all be found within Bolivia's borders.

Format PS4, XO, PC **Publisher** Ubisoft
Developer Ubisoft Paris **ETA** Winter 2016

GHOST RECON: WILDLANDS

An un-Bolivia-ble open world

Compared to the endless parade of grey-brown shooters set in post-apocalyptic wastelands and post-invasion Americas, this open-world shooter's setting looks like a lovely getaway. Real-world Bolivia boasts a tremendously varied landscape to begin with, and Ubisoft Paris has lovingly compressed it into a packed playground.

Ruining the holiday atmosphere somewhat are a bunch of bloodthirsty drug cartels – and it's your job to take them down. The developer is promising that its open world will accommodate a considerable variety of approaches, from all-out explosive assaults to patient infiltration. Furthermore, you'll take down cartel officers in whichever order you see fit – à la Crackdown or Shadow Of Mordor – and your interventions in their criminal activities will have far-reaching and unpredictable consequences on the criminal factions, as they jostle with each other for superiority.

Ghost town

Naturally, Wildlands provides players with an appropriate assortment of military vehicles, saving you from traversing the vast game world on foot – but if the thought of hopping in a chopper or tearing around in a military buggy all sounds terribly passé, the diminutive drones offer a more novel means of taking in your surroundings. These unmanned contraptions can be used to scope out fortified positions, tag enemy outposts, and even to blow cartel cronies to smithereens.

The pacy gunplay and level-up system may upset series purists, however, and Wildlands seems set to continue Ghost Recon's gradual drift from its roots as a hardcore military sim. But when your co-op fireteam can barrel through an enemy camp in a bullet-spewing dirt-bike squadron, it feels like what's been lost in slow-paced authenticity has been gained in emergent fun. ■ ***James Nouch***

60% complete

GM Instant Reaction

+ A huge, beautiful open world that you're free to take on however you want, alongside a bunch of your mates.

– Die-hard fans might not be so keen on the action-packed shootouts, upgradable skills, and overhauled cover mechanics.

THRILL-O-METER

1 2 3 4 5

Open world antics with genuine variety – get your passport ready.



Format PS4, XO, PS3, 360, PC **Pub** Capcom
Dev Capcom **ETA** Spring 2016

RESIDENT EVIL 0

Capcom returns to the HD remake well, and this time the Japanese publisher is taking the opportunity to update this train-based slice of survival horror action. The character-swapping mechanics of the GameCube original remain intact, with players switching between STARS officer Rebecca Chambers and tank-top-loving criminal Billy Coen in this series prequel. Capcom is also taking the opportunity to add a new mode to the game, in which you play as nefarious, inexplicably super-powered trench coat model Albert Wesker. ■ ***JN***



Format PC **Pub** Team17
Dev Lilith Ltd **ETA** Autumn 2016

ALLISON ROAD

PT may have been unceremoniously yanked from the PlayStation Store, but its influence remains strong, with indie dev Lilith Ltd looking to resurrect Kojima's peculiar take on the horror genre. The prototype features a similarly obsessive approach to environmental detail, as well as a focus on the unnerving quality of deserted domestic spaces. Then there are the bleeding walls and bloodsoaked ghost-women, of course. There's Occulus Rift support too, but ohmygod... *no*. There's only so much our nervous dispositions can take. ■ ***JN***



Format PS4 **Pub** Square Enix
Dev Tri-Ace **ETA** Summer 2016

STAR OCEAN: INTEGRITY AND FAITHLESSNESS

It's been six years since the last entry in Tri-Ace's venerable sci-fi series, but its real-time JRPG battle system remains a distinctive proposition. Combat has been polished to make for a smoother experience, and the elimination of transition screens should ensure less thumb-twiddling. Similarly, the developer is aiming to deliver seamless transitions between gameplay and Star Ocean's dynamic cutscenes, in which the player's input determines narrative outcomes. Think Mass Effect with better hair. ■ ***JN***



Format 3DS **Pub** Capcom
Dev Capcom **ETA** Autumn 2016

ACE ATTORNEY 6

In keeping with the series' dual preoccupations with courtroom rationalism and ancient mysticism, Phoenix Wright is leaving his home city to practice law in the more spiritual land of Kurain. Its people apparently hold a deep belief in the spirits of the dead, and their courtrooms see judges and prosecutors sitting alongside mystical 'water mirrors'. How these esoteric elements feed into AA's legal proceedings remains to be seen – but so long as we can still yell 'Objection' into our 3DS microphone, we're happy. ■ ***JN***



Format PS4, XO, PC **Pub** 2K Games
Dev Hangar 13 **ETA** Summer 2016

MAFIA III

It'll be done when it's don

The story of an Italian-American's ascent from lowly putz to formidable mafioso is a well-worn cliché these days. Perhaps that's why 2K Games has surprisingly ditched its typical New York wiseguys in favour of an African-American protagonist and a New Orleans setting.

Whereas previous instalments have focused on your ascent through the 'family', Mafia III hones in more closely on the inevitable conflicts that arise between rival criminal organisations. So, playing as Vietnam veteran Lincoln Clay, you'll assist the 'black mob' in its brutal battles against the local Italian mafia.

More generally, a host of technical upgrades ahead of this current-gen debut distinguish Mafia III from its franchise forebears. Visual upgrades abound, while the slightly stiff combat of previous games has been refined. The result – in theory – is an altogether more convincing brand of mob justice. ■ ***JN***

GM Instant Reaction
THRILL-O-METER 1 2 3 4 5
Old stalwart gets welcome new direction.



Junkrat may be fragile, but he drops an assortment of live grenades if killed. Best dispatched at a distance.

85% complete

Format PC **Publisher** Blizzard **Developer** Blizzard **ETA** Summer 2016

OVERWATCH

Rats and hogs have never looked so dangerous

Blizzard's forthcoming multiplayer FPS has the endearingly chunky look of a Pixar movie, but that's for naught if it doesn't have the charm and personality to back it up. Fortunately, everything from the hyperactive voicework to the smooth animations points to a game with oodles of character... and oodles of characters.

Take Junkrat, one of the latest warriors to be added to the expanding roster. This pyromaniac limps around levels on a pneumatic peg-leg, ensuring his hobbling gait stands out even at a distance. But if you still have trouble, he'll be the one launching bouncing grenades and concussion mines around the map between bouts of manic tittering.

Roadhog is Overwatch's other new addition, acting as a pot-bellied tank who can grab enemies with his chain hook before reeling them in close for a lethal shotgun blast. His fearsome Ultimate unleashes a rapid-fire burst of shrapnel, stunning and then mowing down foes.

With a line-up that now stands at 18 heroes and villains, Blizzard is once again demonstrating its knack for producing strongly differentiated characters, both in terms of personality and gameplay mechanics. Overwatch's beta phase is rapidly approaching – it *should* be live by the time you read this – so we'll imminently have an even better sense of just how well Blizzard's class-based shooter stacks up to the competition, and what exactly its currently mysterious business model will be. ■ ***JN***

GM Instant Reaction
THRILL-O-METER 1 2 3 4 5
Can Blizzard work its magic on the FPS?

A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away....



STAR
BATTLE
2

GET YOUR BATHROBES ON AND WORK ON YO
PREPARE YOURSELVES FOR THE ULTIMATE LAUNC



OUR YODA IMPRESSIONS: PLAYED IT WE HAVE.
CH GUIDE FOR THE BIGGEST GAME IN THE GALAXY

GM Feature
On The Cover!

STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT
EA

INSIDE YOUR FEATURE...

46-49



HANDS-ON
Our comprehensive breakdown of Battlefront ahead of its 19 November release date.

FORCE MAJEURE

BATTLEFIELD STUDIO DICE LINES UP FOR AN UNLIKELY BULLSEYE

The Rebel soldier who was training a mounted blaster cannon on a distant AT-ST is now floating a few feet above the ground, grasping at his throat. He failed to notice our approach (even the rasp of an unfortunate respiratory malady didn't give us away) and now it's too late. We force choke the life from him before turning, with a flourish of our cape, to hunt down further weak-minded Rebel scum to dispatch. We could get used to this – especially the flattering black outfit.







Tattooine looks spectacular, and its highly veritcal terrain makes for satisfyingly complex battles.

Stomping around the battlefield as Darth Vader is just one of the many fantasies Star Wars Battlefront goes out of its way to fulfill (there are plenty more iconic characters to inhabit, and wishy-washy liberals will be relieved to hear that they can inflict mischief as Luke Skywalker, instead). You can fly the Millennium Falcon, or trip up a towering AT-AT with a T-47 airspeeder's tow cable. You can walk calmly towards your enemy while deflecting brightly coloured blaster fire with your lightsaber, or enter into a duel with an opposing Jedi or Sith as the battle rages around you. And, yes, *that* music will soundtrack all of the above actions.

NEW HOPE

Battlefront is by no means the first game to offer up these things, even the loan of Vader's shiny boots and helmet (that honour goes to risible PS1 fighter Star Wars: Masters Of Teräs Käsi, released in 1998), but they've never looked *this* polished before. DICE has turned its powerful Frostbite 3 engine's sights onto the

50-51

INTERVIEW
Design director Niklas Fegraeus on the art of defending drop pods and mastering maps.

52-53

GAME GUIDE
A read of these eight expert tips will ensure your matches don't end in a Darth mauling.

54-57

THE LIST
We've put together a definitive history of Star Wars games – how many have you played?

biggest licence there is, and the results are – and this is not a word we use lightly – breathtaking.

Hoth's icy tundra is a shimmering, crystalline wasteland that stretches as far as the eye can see. Sullust is a lifeless landscape of geothermal vents and igneous outcrops, juxtaposed with steaming azure pools. And Tatooine's sun-baked canyons and plateaus are dotted with animal-hide shelters and tattered, discoloured bunting. All of these places are illuminated by red and green blaster bolts, and fizzing explosions that somehow evoke the practical effects of the '70s and '80s while simultaneously raising the bar for videogame pyrotechnics. As Star Wars games go, Battlefront is the most stirringly authentic yet.

GRAND MOFF TALKIN'

Battlefront's emotive power isn't simply the product of persuasive tech and canon-respecting surface gloss; the game's convincing heart has emerged from the obsessive fandom of the team behind it. "To me, Star Wars is this amazing universe that I remember from an early age – not so much from the movies when I was a small kid, but from the toys and the way that there was this thing that everyone was talking about," senior producer Sigurlína Ingvarsdottir, who joined DICE after a stint working on Eve Online at CCP Games, explains. "Wanting to fight with lightsabers, build Star Destroyers out of bricks or whatever. But I've always been interested in fantasy and science fiction, [and that's] fueled my love and interest of technology, which I think is part of the reason I studied engineering, which in turn is why I work in games – and on Star Wars – today."

The dedication to authenticity that comes from this passion for the source material is most obvious when playing Walker Assault. The 40-player mode drops you straight into the unforgettable Battle Of Hoth scene, as AT-ATs and ground troops attempt to storm Echo Base. Playing as the Rebels, you must attempt to activate and defend uplink stations in order to call in Y-Wing bombing runs. During these strikes, the otherwise indestructible AT-ATs become vulnerable to all fire, and those pesky snowspeeder tow cables. Sign up with the Dark Side, however, and you need to swat the Rebel force away from the uplink stations and ensure your walkers reach the Echo Base power generator unhindered.

The large map features a network of trenches, a dangerous mountainous section, and the corridors and hangar of the base itself, and while the encounter is 24 players shy of Battlefield's 64-player matches, it feels no less urgent. The action itself is streamlined and frenetic, freed from the sometimes dispiriting complexity of weapon types and upgrades that can make fighting experienced players in a new online shooter an uphill struggle. You pick from an unlockable selection of four blaster rifles, all with subtly different stats (one might do more damage per shot, while another could have a higher fire rate) and your fire power is bolstered by a 'hand' of three interchangeable Star Cards. Cards can be used as many times as you like


Survival sees you crash land on the planet's surface with Imperial forces in hot pursuit.









"THE ACTION IS STREAMLINED AND FREE FROM COMPLEX UPGRADES"

FRONT LINE

Star Wars fans aren't the only people DICE needs to please. The studio's game is actually the third in the Battlefront series created by Pandemic Studios in 2004. DICE's game is a more polished effort, and one that trades some of the first two games' free play for a more directed (and dramatic) take on Star Wars' key encounters. The fact that you can't steer the AT-ATs, for example, has caused some consternation among fans of the original, but the decision ensures that these deadly behemoths don't lose their grace or menace in the hands of an inexperienced pilot. Open space battles are gone, too, but DICE allows you to duke it out in the skies above planetary surfaces instead. Sweet.

– though a short cool-down period for each prevents spamming – and include items like the single-shot, sniping Cycler Rifle, shield- and droid-destroying Ion Charge, and a Jump Pack. You don't have to worry about ammunition, but weapons can overheat, leaving you vulnerable for a spell. However, in-built active cooling means that if you hit the Square button at the right moment, you'll be able to start firing again instantly – though if you get your timing wrong, you'll reset the countdown.

Waiting a few more seconds to be able to fire again is little hardship compared to the potential fallout DICE faces if it gets Battlefront wrong. Taking up the reins on a Star Wars project, and assuming responsibility for the preservation of not only their own childhood memories but those of so many other people, was a daunting prospect for the team. Perhaps none felt that pressure more keenly than design director Niklas Fegraeus, a Star Wars superfan who claims to have watched the original films between 200 and 300 times to date. "I was terrified. Absolutely terrified," he admits. "But dealing with that was actually easier than I thought, because no matter where all that terror came from, it was completely overshadowed by the thought of, 'How could I ever say no?' This is the opportunity of a lifetime that no one could ever hope to get. So screw fear, just do it [laughs]."

TOKEN GESTURES

Which brings us neatly back to how we feel mercilessly crushing Rebel resistance as Vader. You take control of villain and hero characters by finding spinning tokens, marked with a sword icon, on the battlefield. Once collected, you have a few seconds to squeeze both bumper buttons, after which your soldier kneels down and calls in support from the Force-wielding big guns – their arrival heralded by a short, skippable cutscene. As well as basic attack and block moves, Darth has three abilities in place of the usual Star Cards – he can unleash the aforementioned Force Choke ability, toss his lightsaber forward like a deadly plasma boomerang, and use a heavy attack to do serious damage. Luke, meanwhile, is too polite to throttle people, so uses Force Push instead. He too has a heavy attack, and can leap forward with Saber Rush to cover a huge amount of distance quickly *and* cut down any Imperial troops unlucky (or stupid) enough to get in the way. The huge advantage gained from bringing Jedi training to a gun fight is counterbalanced with a gradually decreasing health bar – you can top it up a little with each kill, but once it reaches zero you're requisitioned back to the cannon fodder ranks.

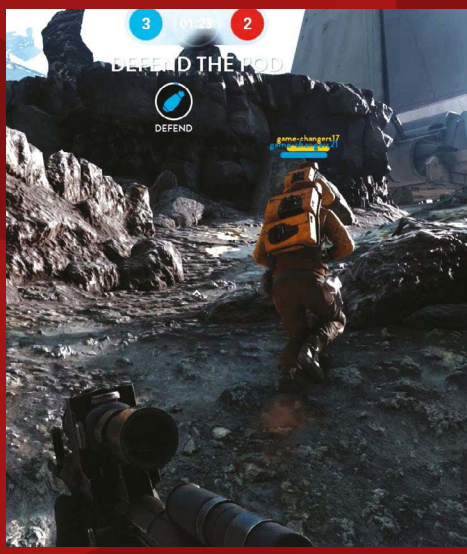
Other tokens are available, however. Some simply furnish you with powerful, one-use tools, such as automated sentry guns and the terrifying Thermal Implosion grenades. Others give you control of bipedal AT-STs and their selection of devastating ordnance, or pop you in the death-dealing turret of one of the lumbering AT-ATs. And still more plonk you in the seat of a Tie-Fighter, X-Wing or other lovely Star Wars ship to duke it out in the skies above the main tussle. The setup makes becoming a hero or finding a vehicle less frequent than even getting to pilot Battlefield's attack chopper or jets, but their shifting positions across the map make for a dynamic, opportunistic rhythm of play as you switch tactics on the fly, as opposed to each time you die.

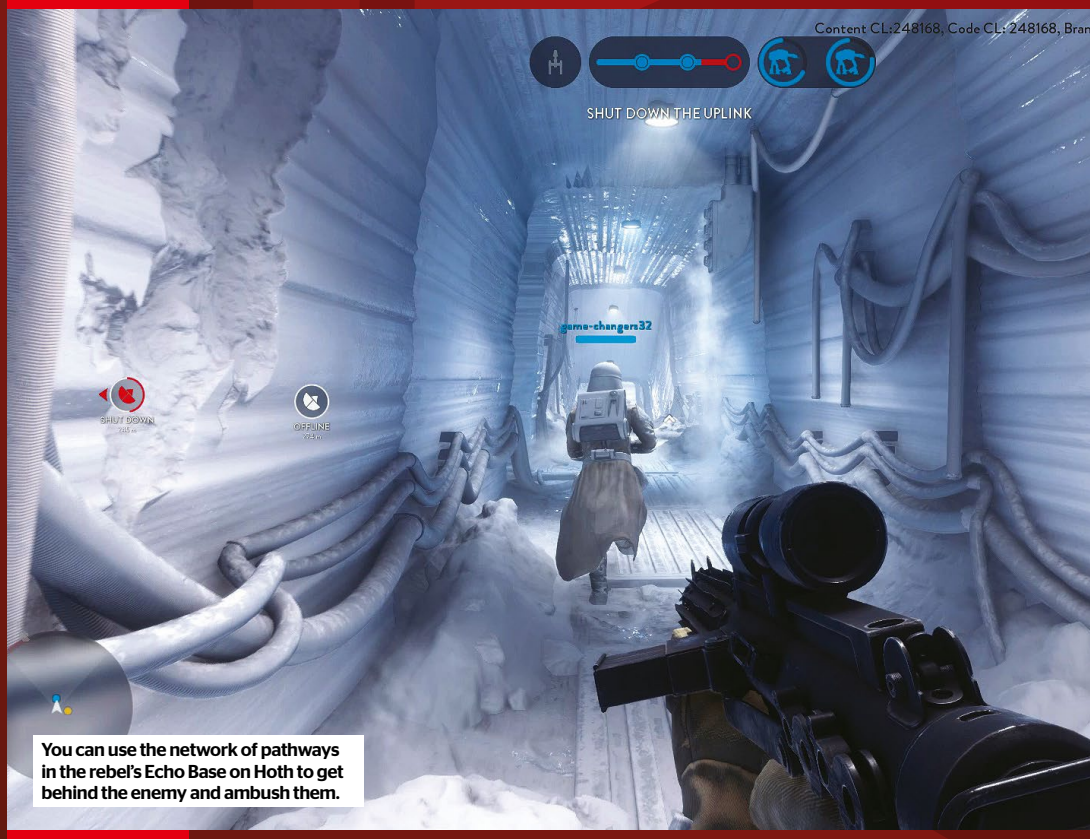
While Walker Assault appears to be Battlefront's flagship game type, the more intimate 8v8 Drop Zone skirmishes prove just as much of a draw. In this mode both teams must squabble over supply pods that plummet out of the sky. If you reach one first and hold the action button down for a couple of seconds, you start a timer that, if left unchallenged, claims the pod for your team and scores you a point. But if an opposing team member can stand next to it for long enough without dying, they can reset the timer and begin a new countdown in their favour. It's simple king of the hill-style stuff, but with a pacy, shifting focus as each new pod arrives, funneling players to the new location. Brilliantly, as the timer doesn't require you to stand in the vicinity of the pod to

DRINKING THE LUCAS-AID

Battlefront developer DICE has had to work closely with Disney and Lucasfilm – the team even got to visit Skywalker Ranch and rummage through the Lucasfilm archive of props and models. "It was very smooth – it's been a joy, actually," Fegraeus says of working with the guardians of the Star Wars universe. "Getting to tap into their knowledge and experience pool, getting access to physical things like the props, and going to the original film locations has been amazing. It's been a very interesting collaboration where game ideas and rules about the universe all combine into this one product. It's been super-fun, and just a great experience overall."



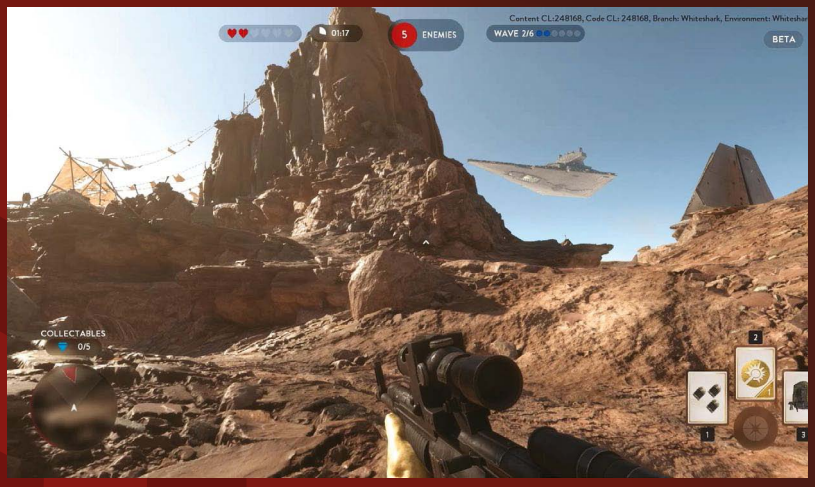




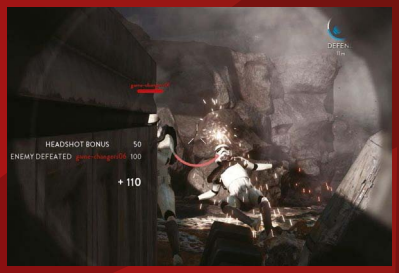
You can use the network of pathways in the rebel's Echo Base on Hoth to get behind the enemy and ambush them.



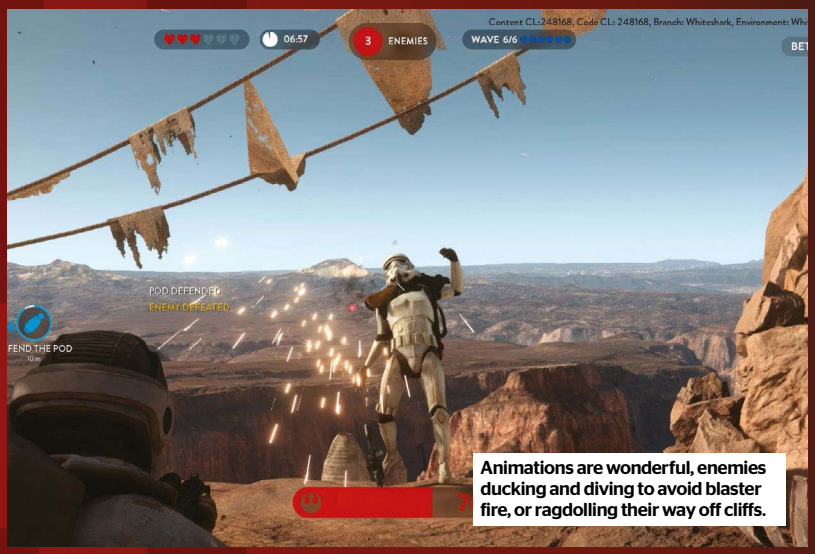












Animations are wonderful, enemies ducking and diving to avoid blaster fire, or ragdolling their way off cliffs.



"IF YOU JUST WANT TO PLAY BY YOURSELF, YOU CAN"

be active, you're free to experiment with tactics to defend your quarry. You can stick close by, sure, but the option is also there to find a good sniping spot further away, or simply run off and harry the other team before they can get anywhere near it. It's a well-balanced mode that necessitates co-ordinated teamwork to win, and one which works particularly well in tighter, cover-rich maps like the rocky Sullust.



SOLO PERFORMANCE

Other modes include: Supremacy, a five capture-point battle; the aerial-combat focused Fighter Squadron; Hero Hunt, where seven soldiers face off against a single Star Wars legend; robot-escorting Droid Run; Cargo, a tug-of-war take on capture the flag; Heroes Vs Villains, in which both teams are flush with Hero characters; and classic deathmatch mode Blast. But before tackling the competitive multiplayer, it's worth spending some time with the single-player/co-op survival missions.

These horde-style matches drop you into a map as Rebels trying to escape Imperial pursuit, and require you to survive wave after wave of AI-controlled attackers. Supply pods occasionally land and spill out power-ups, but only if you manage to successfully defend them – the Imperial forces are just as capable of capturing them. They're also pleasingly unpredictable – a trait which, when combined with some truly brilliant animation, makes them feel almost like human opponents. Whether this mode can sustain our interest once all the achievements have been bagged and the three difficulty settings conquered is another question, but it does at least provide an option to play offline in a game which, controversially, doesn't come with a single-player campaign.

"At its core, the Battlefront franchise is multiplayer focused," Fegraeus explains when we ask him about the omission. "But we do want people to enjoy their Star Wars fantasies even if they're alone. If you just want to play by yourself then you should be able to do that. So we have the missions. But also, that good old split-screen, 'let's play together' thing – I love that. The missions do allow for both of those experiences, across the board."

Star Wars Battlefront finds itself in a unique position, then. DICE has managed to construct a Star Wars game that's fiercely dedicated to the task of evoking childhood memories and fulfilling the wishes of ardent fans (even lore pedants), but also one that doesn't reject innovation or fresh gameplay ideas for the sake of the fiction's canon. And because of those fans, Battlefront is also an online shooter with a potential audience far in excess of even the Battlefield and Call Of Duty series, as it threatens to draw in people who may not have had any interest in the genre previously.

For that reason, the game has been streamlined in a way that may put off shooter stalwarts on first contact, but it would be a great shame if anyone rejected it on that front – there's tactical nuance and depth to be mined from beneath its pristine surface. A bigger issue, though, is whether Battlefront can avoid the server problems which so severely marred Battlefield 3 and 4's launches. The game's potential to shake up the genre is undeniable – DICE just needs to stay on target. ■

NEVER TELL US THE ODDS



A GOOD BLASTER AT YOUR SIDE IS ONE THING, BUT HEADING INTO A RUCKUS ARMED WITH TIPS DIRECT FROM THE DEVELOPER IS A DIFFERENT KETTLE OF WOMP RATS ALTOGETHER. HERE'S DESIGN DIRECTOR **NIKLAS FEGRAEUS** ON HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF BATTLEFRONT...

FIRST STEPS

"Starting out is not so much to do with [understanding] loadouts, as the things that you use and equip are all quite straightforward and easy to understand. It has more to do with your playstyle. The distinction between those who are familiar with shooters and those who are not comes down to what modes you play, because that is where we have a very large and broad offering of elements that are really friendly and easy to grasp for people who are not very experienced. Then we also have the advanced and more tactical things for the more experienced players. That is my wish: that people who are not so experienced can use those more accessible means of play to learn and improve, so they eventually feel that 'yeah, I feel good at this and am ready to go into the more advanced and demanding stuff'."





MAKING PROGRESS

"The most interesting thing with the progression system is how it allows you to quite freely design your own career and your own playstyle. So instead of having things laid out in a predetermined manner, here it is basically up to you what you want to go for, in coming up with your own tactics and what play style you want to use."

SABER BOSSING

"There are some pretty in-depth tactics to learn when you get very good with Heroes. It depends a lot on what type of threat it is that you are facing. One thing to be wary of is incoming blaster fire, because you can block it with your lightsaber, and actually deflect the blaster fire back – and to use that to have enemies shoot themselves is seriously satisfying. But you cannot do that forever, so you have to pick your moments, and be sure to use it wisely."

PICK YOUR MODE

"We do have some quite traditional game modes in there – staples that people enjoy are in there for a reason. But we also really wanted to take the components of Star Wars and turn them into game modes. We asked ourselves, what does it mean to have a game mode in that universe? And that is why we have modes in the game like Walker Assault and Drop Zone, for example, where we take iconic components from the universe, and try to make a rule system, and a game mode and an objective around them – to really give it that distinctive Star Wars flavour and make it an authentic Star Wars fantasy."

STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT



DROPPING IN

"The key in Drop Zone is when to capture the pod, and how to defend it. If you just run straight for a dropped pod, it's very likely it will attract a lot of eyes on from the enemy, and you will get shot or blown up by a grenade or something like that. So it is very important to not panic if the enemy catches the pod. The most important thing is to approach it tactically and carefully, and to make sure that you clear out any enemies that are defending it. Usually guarding with your feet at the pod is really bad – because then you are visible to everyone. So scout out the area, take out defenders, and then take the pod. And then when you defend it yourself, try to take out all of the routes that lead to it. That's quite tricky and requires some teamwork, but if you do it successfully you can really nail the opposition down and take the pod."

"WE WANTED TO GET A REALLY GOOD, POWERFUL JEDI FANTASY IN THE GAME, WITHOUT CAUSING ANY GAMEPLAY IMBALANCE"

MAP TIME

"Every design idea comes with some kind of philosophy behind it. What we looked at a lot was what variation of gameplay the different planets offer. When you compare Endor and Hoth, there's a very strong difference in the environment. That affects the gameplay profoundly, because either you are hiding behind redwoods that are all over the place, or you are in a big open space. So we tried to not only use the environments, but also the kind of non-natural structures that occur on these planets, which are also different. When you play on a planet, you usually need to pick the right gear and weaponry in order to use the environment to your advantage. And I'm really looking forward to seeing players playing with that and using different set-ups that they like."

PLAYING THE HEROES

"What we wanted to do here was give people these really strong Hero characters. But the problem is if you do something that is very powerful you can end up unbalancing the game, which is no fun. So we thought about how we could get a really good, powerful Jedi fantasy into the game without causing this potential imbalance. That is where we came up with this integration into our power-up system, which basically means that, in these big modes, where Jedis can come in and change the course of the battle, you get them for one life, and that is really your chance for greatness. It can be accessible to everyone, not just the player who is in the lead or something like that."

CLASS ACTS

"You're not forced into a specific role or class or anything like that, it has more to do with 'I really like to play this kind of mode and I really like to play these kinds of maps, and I think these specific items and weapons are really, really interesting, so I will go for those' – and you can. So it does not force you into specific predetermined paths, it allows you to be quite open and quite dynamic with what you do, and allow you agency to alter your playstyle and your path to it."

JUMP AROUND

"If you look at the more open maps where you have to cover terrain a lot – Drop Zone is actually an example where you have to cover terrain quite quickly, as as soon as you have taken one pod, another quickly pops up – the jump pack is extremely useful. But then if you look at guarding an uplink inside the rebel base on Hoth, the jump pack is no good at all. So the challenges vary quite a lot when it comes to traversal."

BAGSY THE CYCLER RIFLE

"On Hoth, at least in the more open areas, it is good to have a Cycler rifle with you – it can go through the shields of any defenders, and it can fire effectively at longer ranges. But if you're defending a pod on Sullust and find one of the power-ups that gives you a turret, then that can be a really powerful asset, as you can put a turret down one of the passages, and guard the other yourself. And then you should probably have a DLT – a repeating heavy blaster – to engage several enemies at close-to-medium range."

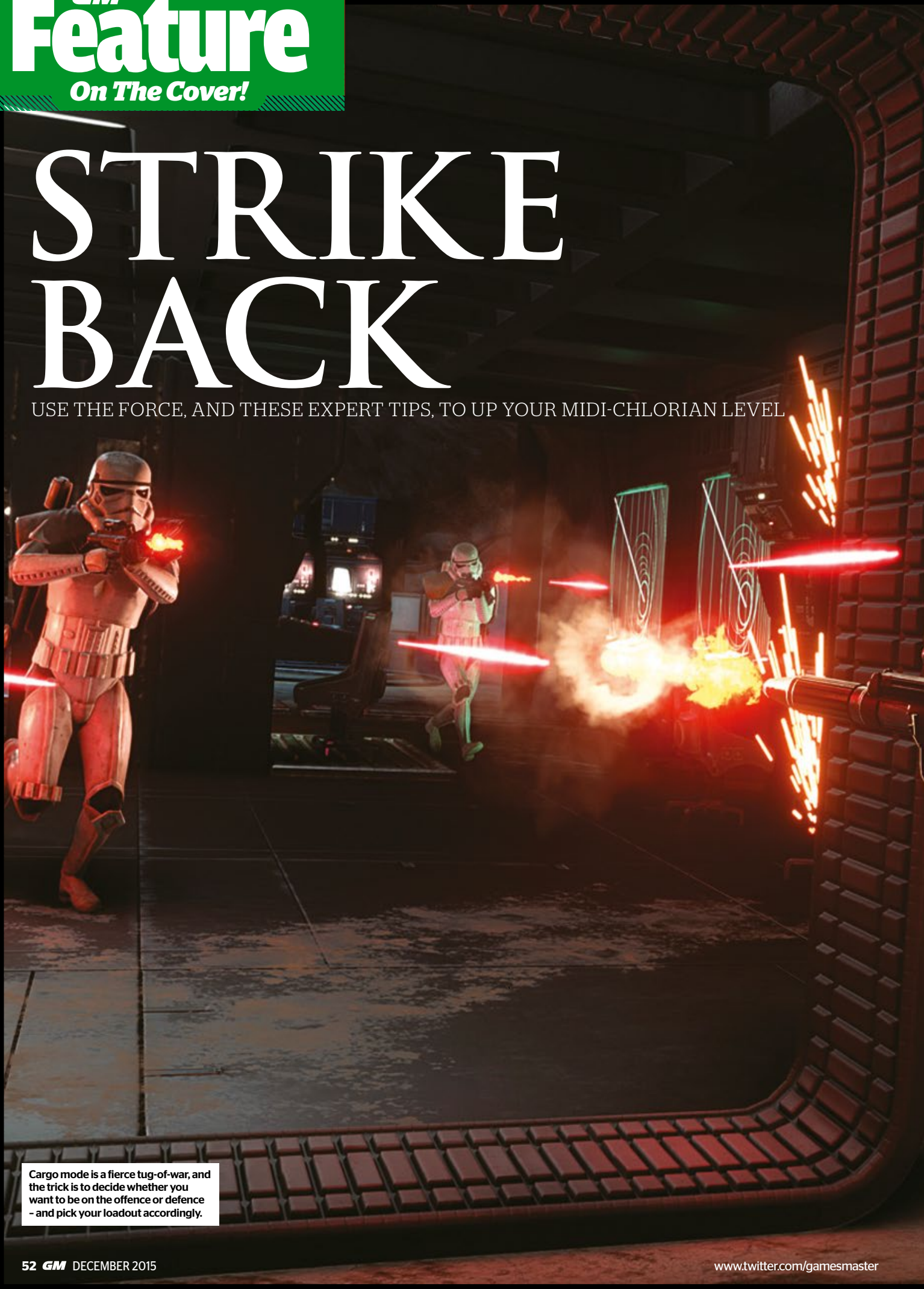
SKYWALKER'S THE LIMIT

"We got the inspiration for the design of the characters from the Star Wars universe. Luke Skywalker is this character who, as a viewer of the films, you identify with. His story goes from zero to one hundred, from a farmer to a hero. One of the things he does in the films is to be very quick – you see him jumping out of the carbonite freezing chamber, and he does his somersault moves on the barges and so on. So we wanted to capture that speed and agility he has. And then the contrast to that of course is Vader, who never runs around in any sprinting fashion, and instead just scares the s*** out of you by showing up, and is generally just super tanky and mighty."



STRIKE BACK

USE THE FORCE, AND THESE EXPERT TIPS, TO UP YOUR MIDI-CHLORIAN LEVEL



Cargo mode is a fierce tug-of-war, and the trick is to decide whether you want to be on the offence or defence – and pick your loadout accordingly.



STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT
EA

TAKE THINGS UP A NOTCH

A considerable number of weapons, equipment, and abilities are locked out until you reach a certain rank, so you should initially focus on levelling up your character. By starting in smaller modes such as Drop Zone, you can earn XP without being too outclassed by players with more advanced gear. Survival enables you to test out different loadouts without needing to unlock them, thereby helping you choose what you want you purchase next.

I NEED A HERO

Pay close attention to any vehicle or Hero power-ups that appear, and nab them as swiftly as possible, as other players will also be trying to secure these useful items for themselves. (The selfish swines.) These items often come with a countdown timer, so be sure to use them quickly, or you'll lose them. However, as it takes a couple of seconds to activate them, you should retreat to a safe spot before hitting your Power Ability buttons.

SHOOT FIRST (FROM THE HIP)

Unlike most other contemporary blasters, aiming straight down the sights of a weapon doesn't give a significant boost to the accuracy of your shots. Unless you're trying to take down enemies over a long distance, stick to firing from the hip. The reason for adopting this approach is twofold: your shots always hit the target in the middle of the screen, and you save valuable reaction time by not having to wait until your sights come up.

RADAR LOVE

The radar in the bottom corner of the screen is a hugely useful tool, as it highlights your team-mates in blue and any Heroes in yellow, and (naturally) there's safety in numbers if you can stick with the rest of your team. Along the same lines, watch for any radial wedges that flash red – this indicates a threat coming from that particular direction. And, of course, any red blips are close enemies that need to be dealt with or avoided.

ENJOY ALL POD CONS

When you're defending a pod in Drop Zone mode, the temptation is to dash away from it as soon as it's secured, in order to tackle the next objective. This approach is dumber than Jar Jar Binks. Stick around for a few seconds after and a fresh set of power-ups will drop – and staying nearby gives you the best chance to grab one of them before any team-mates snatch them up. Sometimes it pays to be greedy. (And by 'sometimes', we mean 'absolutely always'.)

COOL RUNNINGS

Guns have unlimited ammunition, so instead of worrying about running out of bullets, you should just focus on firing in short, controlled bursts (wait, where have we heard that before?) to avoid overheating your weapon. Practice this approach, as it allows you to keep shooting without interruption – though if you do overheat, then be prepared for the quick button-matching prompt which enables you to cool off immediately. *If* you nail it.

UP YOUR ARSENAL

Everyone loves a freebie, and thankfully Battlefront enjoys granting 'em. Keep a look out for weapon power-ups, as the markers will be clearly visible on screen when you get close enough to them, even through obstacles. These provide you with useful Power Ability items such as turrets and orbital strikes – but remember that you can only carry one of these items at a time, so don't be precious about using it as soon as the opportunity to do so arises.

BE A TROOPER

In Walker Assault mode it's important to focus on the current objective, especially as they vary during the course of a game – if you're not fighting to establish or eliminate the uplinks, then you're not helping your team in the long run. (And *some* selflessness is required in order to progress.) Once you hit the endgame, head to the AT-ATs, and either do your best to take down the attacking forces, or shower them with everything you've got.

STAR LINE UP

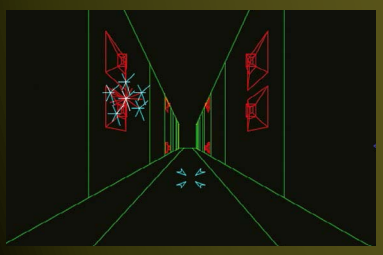
TRIED A FEW STAR WARS GAMES OVER THE YEARS, EH? WELL CHECK THIS LOT OUT. HOW MANY HAVE YOU PLAYED?

Retro Master Special

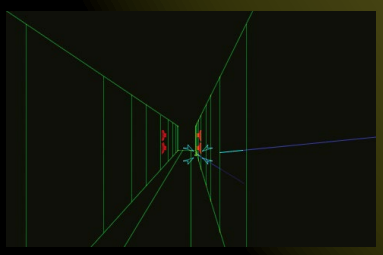


STAR WARS
Justin Towell
Reviews Editor, GamesRadar+

"As this classic gem proves, you don't actually need millions of textured polygons to make you believe that you're in Luke's cockpit, assaulting the Death Star. All that's really required are some green wireframes and the occasional snippet of fuzzy, digitised speech. Still brilliantly playable, even 32 years on."







- **Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back**
  Formats: Intellivision, Atari 2600 **Year** 1982 **Pub** Parker Brothers
- **Star Wars**
  Formats: PC, Amiga, Atari ST, Amstrad CPC, C64, ColecoVision,Atari 5200, Spectrum, BBC Micro, Atari 2600, Atari 8-bit, Arcade **Year** 1983 **Pub** Atari
- **Star Wars: Return of the Jedi - Death Star Battle**
  Formats: Atari 5200, Spectrum, Atari 2600, Atari 8-bit **Year** 1983 **Pub** Parker Brothers
- **Star Wars: Jedi Arena**
  Formats: Atari 2600 **Year** 1983 **Pub** Parker Brothers
- **Star Wars: Return of the Jedi**
  Formats: GameCube, Amiga, Atari ST, Amstrad CPC, C64, Spectrum, BBC Micro, Arcade **Year** 1984 **Pub** Atari
- **Death Star**
  Formats: C64, Spectrum **Year** 1984 **Pub** Rabbit Software
- **Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back**
  Formats: GameCube, Amiga, Atari ST, Amstrad CPC, C64, Spectrum, BBC Micro, Arcade **Year** 1985 **Pub** Atari
- **Death Star Interceptor**
  Formats: C64, Spectrum **Year** 1985 **Pub** System 3 Software
- **Star Wars: Droids**
  Formats: Amstrad CPC, C64, Spectrum **Year** 1988 **Pub** Mastertronic
- **Star Wars**
  Formats: Game Gear, Game Boy, Master System, NES **Year** 1991 **Pub** JVC
- **Super Star Wars**
  Formats: Wii, SNES (Coming soon to PS4) **Year** 1992 **Pub** JVC
- **Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back**
  Formats: Game Boy, NES **Year** 1992 **Pub** JVC
- **Star Wars Arcade**
  Formats: GameCube*, Sega 32X, Arcade **Year** 1993 **Pub** Sega
- **Star Wars: Rebel Assault**
  Formats: PC, 3DO, Mega CD **Year** 1993 **Pub** LucasArts
- **X-Wing**
  Formats: PC **Year** 1993 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Super Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back**
  Formats: Wii, SNES **Year** 1993 **Pub** JVC
- **TIE Fighter**
  Formats: PC **Year** 1994 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars Chess**
  Formats: PC, Mega CD **Year** 1994 **Pub** The Software Toolworks
- **Super Star Wars: Return of the Jedi**
  Formats: SNES, Game Gear, Game Boy **Year** 1994 **Pub** JVC
- **Star Wars: Rebel Assault II: The Hidden Empire**
  Formats: PC, PS1 **Year** 1995 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars: Dark Forces**
  Formats: PC, PS1 **Year** 1995 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire**
  Formats: PC, N64 **Year** 1996 **Pub** Nintendo
- **Star Wars: X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter**
  Formats: PC **Year** 1997 **Pub** LucasArts



SUPER STAR WARS
Matt Elliott
Commisioning Editor







"Super Star Wars is brilliant because it simultaneously has everything and nothing from A New Hope. Jawa sandcrawlers filled with molten lava, bullseyeing mutant womp rats from your landspeeder, jittery shootouts in Mos Eisley, and using the power of the Force to blow up the Death Star. An inventive, exhilarating load of nonsense."



ROGUE SQUADRON
Matt Sakuraoka-Gilman
Editor



"As good as certain previous games had been (Rebel Assault weirdly occupied a lot of my time) this was the first that really transported me into the Star Wars universe. The combination of the analogue stick, an innovation at the time, and screeching dogfights was ace."



JEDI POWER BATTLES
Matt Sakuraoka-Gilman
Editor



"Take a simple but effective lightsaber combat system and a whole council of badass Jedis. Pop them into a 3D platform puzzler. Invite a friend round for a sofa co-op session. There you go, one of the most underrated, forgotten classics in Star Wars videogame history."

- **Star Wars Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II**
  Formats: PC **Year** 1997 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars: Masters of Teräs Käsi**
  Formats: PS1 **Year** 1997 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars: Yoda Stories**
  Formats: PC, Game Boy Color **Year** 1997 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars: Rogue Squadron**
  Formats: PC, N64 **Year** 1998 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars: Supremacy**
  Formats: PC **Year** 1998 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars Trilogy Arcade**
  Formats: Arcade **Year** 1998 **Pub** Sega
- **Star Wars: Droid Works**
  Formats: PC **Year** 1998 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars: Episode I - The Phantom Menace**
  Formats: PC, PlayStation **Year** 1999 **Pub** LucasArts
- **X-Wing Alliance**
  Formats: PC **Year** 1999 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars Episode I: Racer**
  Formats: PC, Dreamcast, Game Boy Color, N64 **Year** 1999 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars: Yoda's Challenge Activity Center**
  Formats: PC **Year** 1999 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars: The Gungan Frontier**
  Formats: PC **Year** 1999 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars: Pit Droids**
  Formats: PC, Mobile **Year** 1999 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars: JarJar's Journey Adventure Book**
  Formats: PC **Year** 1999 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars: Anakin's Speedway**
  Formats: PC **Year** 1999 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars: Episode I - Jedi Power Battles**
  Formats: GBA, Dreamcast, PS1 **Year** 2000 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars: Episode I - Obi-Wan's Adventures**
  Formats: Game Boy Color **Year** 2000 **Pub** THQ
- **Star Wars: Racer Arcade**
  Formats: Arcade **Year** 2000 **Pub** Sega
- **Star Wars: Force Commander**
  Formats: PC **Year** 2000 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars: Demolition**
  Formats: Dreamcast, PS1 **Year** 2000 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars Math: Jabba's Game Galaxy**
  Formats: PC **Year** 2000 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars: Early Learning Activity Center**
  Formats: PC **Year** 2000 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars: Episode I - Battle for Naboo**
  Formats: PC, N64 **Year** 2001 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars: Obi-Wan**
  Formats: Xbox **Year** 2001 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars: Starfighter**
  Formats: PC, PS3, Xbox, PS2, Arcade **Year** 2001 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars: Super Bombad Racing**
  Formats: PS2 **Year** 2001 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars: Galactic Battlegrounds**
  Formats: PC **Year** 2001 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars: The Clone Wars**
  Formats: GameCube, Xbox, PS2 **Year** 2002 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars: Episode II - Attack of the Clones**
  Formats: GBA **Year** 2002 **Pub** THQ



EPISODE I: RACER
Robin Valentine
Production Editor



"As an impressionable young lad, this podracing game blew my mind with its incredible sense of speed – it felt as spectacular and dangerous as in the film. I loved its stable of bizarre alien drivers, too – finally I could play as feet-for-hands camel lizard Sebulba!"



STARFIGHTER
Sam Freeman
Art Editor



"Space sims have always been a passion of mine, and this game was a particular highlight of the genre. 14 action-packed missions of fast and furious gameplay, blasting your way through the lush landscapes of Naboo and the galaxy, is all it took to get me properly hooked."

GM Feature
On The Cover!



ROGUE SQUADRON II: ROGUE LEADER
Matt Pellet
Editor, OPM



One of the all-time great console launch titles, it fulfilled the fantasy of being a pilot in a galaxy far, far away, in a trilogy-spanning assault on every Star Wars memory I hold dear. Going for hard-as-carbonite medals and unlocking the extra modes and ships was pure Force magic.



KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC
Matt Elliott
Commisioning Editor



Imagine Mass Effect with Jedi. That's exactly what Knights of the Old Republic delivers: romance, betrayal, intergalactic travel and Wookies. *Wookies*. You haven't experienced Bioware at their best until you've constructed your first lightsaber and saved a Jedi princess.

- **Star Wars: The New Droid Army**
  Formats: GBA **Year** 2002 **Pub** THQ
- **Star Wars: Rogue Squadron II: Rogue Leader**
  Formats: GameCube **Year** 2002 **Pub** Activision
- **Star Wars: Jedi Starfighter**
  Formats: PS3, Xbox, PS2, (Coming soon to PS4) **Year** 2002 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast**
  Formats: PC, GameCube, Xbox **Year** 2002 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars Racer Revenge**
  Formats: PS3, PS2 (Coming soon to PS4) **Year** 2002 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars: Bounty Hunter**
  Formats: PS3, GameCube. PS2 (Coming soon to PS4) **Year** 2002 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars: Rogue Squadron III: Rebel Strike**
  Formats: GameCube **Year** 2003 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars Jedi Knight: Jedi Academy**
  Formats: PC, Xbox **Year** 2003 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic**
  Formats: PC, Mobile, Xbox **Year** 2003 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars Galaxies: An Empire Divided**
  Formats: PC **Year** 2003 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars: Flight of the Falcon**
  Formats: GBA **Year** 2003 **Pub** THQ
- **Star Wars: Battlefront**
  Formats: PC, Xbox, PS2 **Year** 2004 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars Trilogy: Apprentice of the Force**
  Formats: GBA **Year** 2004 **Pub** Ubisoft
- **Star Wars: Episode III - Revenge of the Sith**
  Formats: PS3, DS, Xbox, GBA, PS2 **Year** 2005 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars: Battlefront II**
  Formats: PC, PS Vita, PSP, Xbox, PS2 **Year** 2005 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic II - The Sith Lords**
  Formats: PC, Xbox **Year** 2005 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Lego Star Wars: The Video Game**
  Formats: PC, GameCube, Xbox, GBA, PS2 **Year** 2005 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars: Republic Commando**
  Formats: PC, Xbox **Year** 2005 **Pub** Activision
- **Lego Star Wars II: The Original Trilogy**
  Formats: PC, PS3, 360, PSP, DS, GameCube, Xbox, GBA, PS2 **Year** 2006 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars: Empire at War**
  Formats: PC **Year** 2006 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars: Lethal Alliance**
  Formats: PSP, DS **Year** 2006 **Pub** Ubisoft
- **Star Wars Battlefront: Renegade Squadron**
  Formats: PS Vita, PSP **Year** 2007 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Lego Star Wars: The Complete Saga**
  Formats: PC, PS3, 360, DS, Wii, Mobile **Year** 2007 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars: The Clone Wars - Lightsaber Duels**
  Formats: Wii **Year** 2008 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars: The Clone Wars - Jedi Alliance**
  Formats: DS **Year** 2008 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars: The Force Unleashed**
  Formats: PC, Mobile, PS Vita, PS3, Wii, 360, PSP, DS, N-Gage, PS2 **Year** 2008 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars: Trench Run**
  Formats: Mobile **Year** 2009 **Pub** THQ Wireless
- **Star Wars: The Clone Wars - Republic Heroes**
  Formats: PC, PS3, Wii, 360, PSP, DS, PS2 **Year** 2009 **Pub** LucasArts



ROGUE SQUADRON III: REBEL STRIKE
Ben Griffin
Contributing Writer



Rescuing Leia from the Death Star, exploring Hoth on a Tauntaun, touching down on Geonosis to shoot stormtroopers – adding on-foot bits to this sublime aerial shooter made it even more Star Wars-y. Missions were bookended by actual film scenes, too.



KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC II
Robin Valentine
Production Editor



With Bioware already off crafting its own sci-fi setting, RPG veterans Obsidian took the reins on this sequel. In a universe defined by black and white, the studio was bold enough to explore the shades of grey, and in the process crafted the most nuanced and interesting Star Wars story in games.



THE FORCE UNLEASHED II
Sam Freeman
Art Editor



"Not the greatest narrative as Star Wars titles go, granted, but I enjoyed the beat 'em up angle of this game immensely. Sometimes I just want to unleash the power of the Force, create carnage, and cut my enemies to pieces. Hang on, does that make me a Sith?"



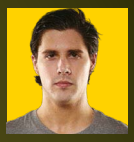
TINY DEATH STAR
Matt Sakuraoka-Gilman
Editor



"Look, I have an addictive personality, alright? Ok, so it wasn't the deepest game on this list, and it wasn't the most reminiscent of the cinematic universe. What this quirky little free-to-play time-eater was, however, was seriously cute. Cute all the way down to its Wookie split ends. D'aaaaaww!"

- **Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron**
  Formats: PS Vita, PSP, DS **Year** 2009 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars Arcade: Falcon Gunner**
  Formats: Mobile **Year** 2010 **Pub** THQ Wireless
- **Clone Wars Adventures**
  Formats: PC **Year** 2010 **Pub** SOE
- **Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II**
  Formats: PC, Mobile, PS3, Wii, 360, DS **Year** 2010 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars Cantina**
  Formats: Mobile **Year** 2010 **Pub** THQ Wireless
- **Star Wars Battle of Hoth**
  Formats: Mobile **Year** 2010 **Pub** THQ Wireless
- **Star Wars: The Old Republic**
  Formats: PC **Year** 2011 **Pub** EA
- **Lego Star Wars III: The Clone Wars**
  Formats: PC, PS Vita, 3DS, PS3, Wii, 360, PSP, DS **Year** 2011 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Star Wars: Imperial Academy**
  Formats: Mobile **Year** 2011 **Pub** mgmoco
- **Kinect Star Wars**
  Formats: 360 **Year** 2012 **Pub** LucasArts
- **Angry Birds Star Wars**
  Formats: PS4, XO, Wii U, PS Vita, 3DS, PS3, Wii, 360, Mobile **Year** 2012 **Pub** Rovio
- **Lego Star Wars: Battle Orders**
  Formats: Mobile **Year** 2012 **Pub** LEGO Systems
- **Star Wars Pinball**
  Formats: PC, Mobile, PS4, XO, Wii U, PS Vita, 3DS, PS3, 360 **Year** 2013 **Pub** ZEN Studios
- **Lego Star Wars: The Yoda Chronicles**
  Formats: Mobile **Year** 2013 **Pub** LEGO Systems
- **Angry Birds Star Wars II**
  Formats: Mobile **Year** 2013 **Pub** Rovio
- **Star Wars: Force Collection**
  Formats: Mobile **Year** 2013 **Pub** Konami
- **Star Wars: Tiny Death Star**
  Formats: Mobile **Year** 2013 **Pub** Disney Mobile Studios
- **Star Wars: Galactic Defense**
  Formats: Mobile **Year** 2014 **Pub** DeNA
- **Star Wars: Commander**
  Formats: Mobile **Year** 2014 **Pub** DeNA
- **Star Wars: Assault Team**
  Formats: Mobile **Year** 2014 **Pub** Disney Interactive
- **Star Wars Rebels: Recon Missions**
  Formats: PC, Mobile **Year** 2015 **Pub** Disney Interactive
- **Star Wars: Uprising**
  Formats: Mobile **Year** 2015 **Pub** Disney Interactive
- **Star Wars: Galaxy of Heroes**
  Formats: Mobile **Year** 2015 **Pub** Disney Interactive
- **Star Wars: Battle Pod**
  Formats: Arcade **Year** 2015 **Pub** Bandai Namco
- **Disney Infinity 3.0**
  Formats: PC, Mobile, PS4, XO, Wii U, PS3, 360 **Year** 2015 **Pub** Disney Interactive
- **Star Wars - Heroes Path**
  Formats: Mobile **Year** 2015 **Pub** Disney
- **Star Wars: Battlefront**
  Formats: PC, PS4, XO **Year** 2015 **Pub** EA





KINECT STAR WARS
Ben Griffin
Contributing Writer



"In my opinion, if you're legitimately offended by the sight of Han Solo dancing to Britney Spears and Princess Leia singing Christina Aguilera, you need to get a life. It's a bit of harmless fun! Motion-controls were a little spotty, but furiously fast first-person podracing was genuinely brilliant."

Enough of our self-indulgent squabbling: we're handing the convo over to you. Which games here do you remember most fondly and why? Let us know via the usual means (Facebook/Twitter/email) and we'll pop your thoughts together for a Fanbase special next ish. In the meantime:

How did you score?





The team was inspired by the music of Foreign Fields, and is now working on the game's soundtrack with the band.

Who is...

Based in New Zealand, Aurora44 was founded in 2013 as a "group of passionate developers who believe in creating quality, hand-crafted experiences for players to explore". Ashen is the team's first project and was announced as part of Microsoft's Xbox One media briefing at E3 this year. It is part of the indie ID@Xbox program.

Format XO, PC **Developer** Aurora44 **ETA** 2016 **Web** http://bit.ly/gmashen

#1 ASHEN

There is a light that always goes out

Remember Journey's seamless multiplayer? The wordless, beautiful friendships that emerged as you played? Well, imagine that but with the distinct possibility of betrayal, and you've got the starting point of this bleak, visually-striking action RPG.

You are a wanderer, let loose in an inhospitable world and trying to find somewhere to call home. And oh, what a world. "Much of the look and feel in Ashen is driven by design. Since this is a setting that hasn't had natural light until now, the foliage and inhabitants are adjusted to a harsh, inhospitable land," explains creative director Derek Bradley. "Their clothing and housing reflect the matter-of-fact way that they survive day by day. This has given way to a very down-to-earth existence."

Spear factor

This philosophy manifests in the weapons – or lack thereof – in the game, too. Despite the presence of lurking monsters of all shapes and sizes, defending yourself isn't easy. "There are no swords," says Bradley. "In a truly harsh world, where resources are scarce and anything you have requires sacrifice, people do more with less. This is why the weapons are things like axes and spears. They require less metal and less time on the forge, and you can make a pile of axe heads with the same effort it would take to craft a sword."

These simplistic forms of defence are reflected in the stark visuals. Characters are faceless, and the world they're exploring is, though beautifully detailed, utterly desolate. Not a welcoming place to build a home – but an intriguing one. "We have created weapons that are simple and minimalist, without decorative flourishes," Bradley confirms. "They serve a purpose, and should feel more like a favourite tool that is worn at the handle to comfortably fit your hand. Similar lines of thought have shaped the overall look and feel of Ashen. We are very focussed on creating a world players will want to explore... something they can believe in."

But it's Ashen's passive multiplayer that really makes it stand out. You aren't alone in this world, though it sounds like sometimes you might prefer to be. "Multiplayer is truly the cornerstone Ashen is built on. Other players will guide you to secrets, join you to defeat challenging foes, and share their light with you in the darkness," Bradley explains. "But the most dangerous thing you can do is get in over your head with someone you can't depend on. While there are no PvP aspects to Ashen, it certainly pays to be wary of those you travel with."

And if you haven't guessed already, Ashen's is not going to be an easy world to make your way in. There's no hand-holding

"THE MOST DANGEROUS THING IS GETTING IN OVER YOUR HEAD WITH SOMEONE YOU CAN'T DEPEND ON"



You start off alone, but do you want to stay that way, or team up with others? Surving alone will be tough – but giving someone your trust might be tougher.



The monsters in the game include lonely giants as well as seriously hungry nasties lurking down in the dark. But also big, friendly flying whales! Oh, who are we kidding, that whale's probably about to eat that person any second now.







There are no swords here, only axes – but then, when you're fighting plant monsters, that's probably the perfect weapon to choose, right?

here when it comes to survival, and the team wants you to deserve victory, not just have it offered up to you on a post-apocalyptic plate.

"The way we look at it, the player should truly feel they have earned everything they have in Ashen," Bradley says. "On occasion, this might mean some really tough gameplay, but there are other aspects of giving ownership back to players. We don't make paths that lead the player perfectly along a quest line, for example. In fact, we put a lot of effort into hiding things, and making the landscape feel natural."

The game is entirely non-linear, letting you find your own way through as you meet NPCs and quest to find goods for survival. And none of that will be on a map because, er, there *isn't* one. "When you stumble across something interesting, our hand as designers didn't guide you there... you are only having that experience because you earned it, via travel, survival, combat, and interpreting the world around you," explains Bradley. "So it's fair to say we have taken the training wheels off! And we do want you to get in over your head at times, but only because those challenges make victory that much more satisfying." Sounds very Dark Souls-y, huh?

LIKE THIS? TRY THIS! LIKE THIS? TRY THIS! LIKE THIS? TRY THIS! LIKE THIS? TRY THIS!

Try this!

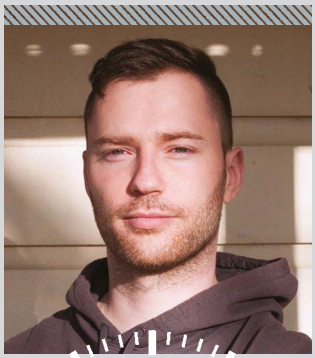
For practice surviving desolate wastelands, why not jump into The Long Dark on Early Access and Xbox Game Preview: http://bit.ly/gmthelongdark

Plant food

It's not just harsh weather conditions or other people you have to deal with. Despite the seriously inhospitable conditions, here be big monsters. "The skeleton creatures in our E3 trailer are actually plant creatures called Foregone," Bradley says gleefully. "The Foregone are plants that feed off ash and grow around the bones of those that perish in the dark dungeons of Ashen. They mimic the musculature of their hosts, consuming their bodies in the process and reducing them to bones... they are always on the hunt for fresh bodies to carry them further. In the case of the giant Foregone, I would certainly suggest running! But braver souls might try taking it on."

In terms of atmosphere and feel, the team has drawn from a slew of sources. "We've been inspired by a huge amount of things, from our own travels around the world, games, film, music , art, and even New Zealand scenery. A book/film that greatly influenced us right at the start is The Road," says Bradley. "The bleak, harsh realities it presented are something that hit home, as well as its stark, minimalist style. In terms of games we have so many, Journey, Dark Souls and Shadow Of The Colossus are three that stand out. The atmosphere we are trying to deliver is a stark, down to earth environment with a hint of mystery. We want players to almost feel the dirt under their fingernails when they play Ashen, while also having moments of awe at the glimpses of light they will encounter."

Bradley isn't revealing how, but we'll have big story decisions to make too that will seal the fate of our settlement. It's refreshing to see a game like this landing on Xbox One too and not just PC, and it's safe to say we're definitely carrying a torch for this one. ■



The 60 Second Pitch

Derek Bradley stops by our campfire

"Ashen is an open-world, third-person action-RPG set in a bleak, sunless land. This is a world where nothing lasts, no matter how tightly you cling to it. Our story starts with a rumble in the distance, and then a light. Through leaking eyes you make out a peak on the horizon. Nothing ever shone so bright. Gameplay in Ashen is split between tactical, real-time combat and exploration. Both are valuable skills to master if you hope to forge a path through the ash. Players regularly weave in and out of each other's game worlds, creating opportunities for them to work together. If you survive long enough to bring others back to the safety of your town, together, you might just stand a chance. Building a thriving town on the ash-laden slopes of the mountains will allow access to crafting, character progression, and a complex tapestry of stories the various travellers have to share. In Ashen, it's up to you to decide where to guide your town. Will you walk into the light, or recede back into the darkness?"

IndieMaster

The Best Of The Indie Scene!

Format PC **Developer** Daedalic Entertainment **ETA** Winter **Web** http://bit.ly/gmbountytrain

#2 BOUNTY TRAIN

A truly on-rails game

Those Hornby train sets just aren't enough, are they? You want real smoke, trees with actual leaves, and maybe to convert that attic space into a cinema room instead of an homage to your childhood Thomas The Tank Engine dreams. Well you're in luck: Bounty Train not only hands you your very own locomotive to personalise, it also sets you loose in 19th century North America in an all new kind of train simulation.



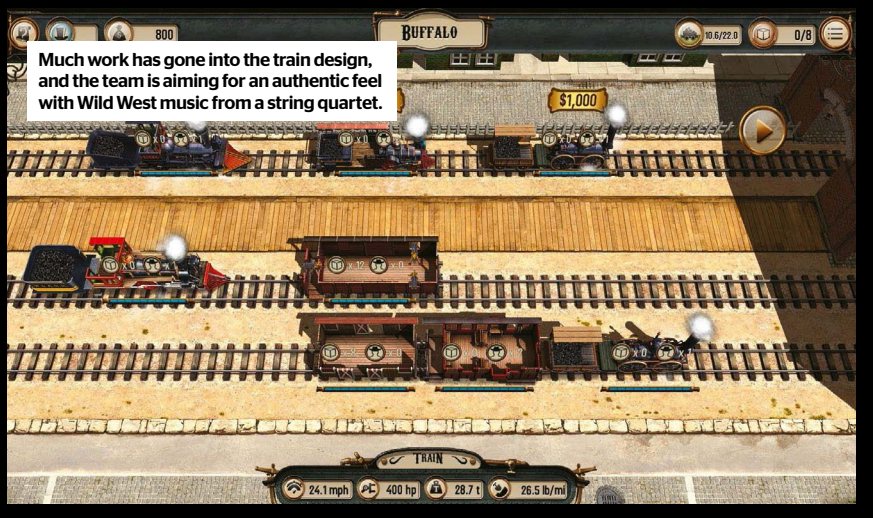
You'll need to keep an eye on your reputation with the various factions – upset one, and they may stop you from entering their settlements.

"Control your very own steam train during the American Frontier era. It's as simple as it sounds, but the complexity lies in the interpretation of the word 'control'," explains producer John Kiel. "We want players not only to steer their train, but also to upgrade or rebuild it, to hire a crew and see it grow over time, to trade, to fight, to experience and change history through quests and special events – and we wanted all of these decisions to have tangible consequences."

Ticket to bribe

Whether you're building, trading with cities, or organising your men, there's always a bigger historical aspect to take into consideration. And, unlike something like Assasin's Creed, you really can change history. "The expansion of the railroads in the US and changes it brought is unparalleled in the world's history. From the art of war to the transportation and logistics of goods, in just a decade the infrastructure of the whole country and daily lives of the people were forever changed," says producer Stefan Hiller. "History is happening everywhere around you, influencing your life whether you engage with it or not. If you're in the right place at the right time and make the right decisions, you can alter the outcome of the war, or save Abraham Lincoln. However, you're not bound to chase these historical events. Since there was so much going on in that time period, you can go wherever you want and experience something else – like meeting and helping Joseph Gayetty, the inventor of toilet paper."

There are factions to side with – including the Natives, Bandits, Union, and Confederates – and multiple ways to finish the game. "How you play and what you do is totally up to you," explains Hiller. "While there is a strong narrative (with five different endings, so far), you're not forced to follow a main story. However, how you play – if you choose to focus on trading, fighting, or saving the Native Americans from getting deported for the sake of new railroad tracks, or if you just want to build the most powerful steam train of all time – every decision influences your ending." We won't lie – we plan to send history totally off the rails. ■



Much work has gone into the train design, and the team is aiming for an authentic feel with Wild West music from a string quartet.

Small... But Perfectly Formed

Best new and upcoming party games on console



THIEF TOWN

If there was ever an excuse to drink tequila and play party games, this is it. Thief Town fills the screen with identical banditos, and it's up to you to figure out who you are, who the other players are, and then stab them without being seen. On second thoughts, tequila might make this impossible.



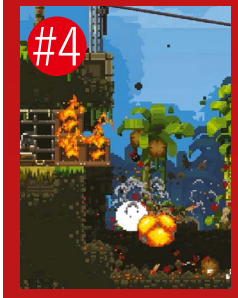
GANG BEASTS

Describing itself as a 'silly multiplayer party game with surly gelatinous characters', this PC Early Access couch brawler sees you floppily chucking your friends through meat grinders, body-slamming them off moving vehicles, and kicking them out of ferris wheels while shouting "Into the sea!".



RUNBOW

Four players? Pah! Runbow lets you play with up to nine, if you have enough Wii U controllers (and batteries). Test both your platforming mettle and colour matching skills as you hurtle through a rainbow of side-scrolling levels. No mates to play with? There's a solo adventure mode too!



BROFORCE

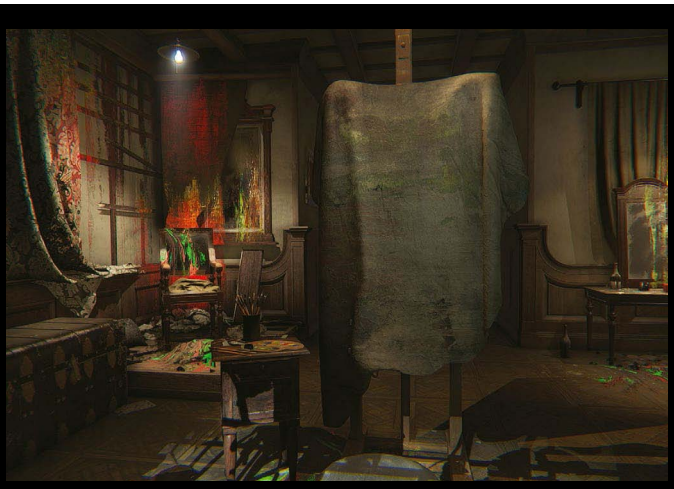
Finally on its way to PS4, this ultra-pixelated slice of, err, manhood, lets you buddy up with your friends to gun down terrorist foes, or pits you against one another in the ultimate display of machismo. Ridiculous explosions, destructible scenery... this tongue-in-cheek side-scroller has it all.



EXTREME EXORCISM

It might look a bit like Towerfall, but this fiendish party platformer comes with its own unique twist. Whenever you win a round, a ghost will spawn that continually reenacts your movements and attacks from that round. As the screen steadily fills up with copycat spirits, utter chaos ensues. ■

www.twitter.com/gamesmaster



Format PC **Developer** Bloober Team **ETA** December **Web** http://bit.ly/gmlayersfear

#3 LAYERS OF FEAR

Faint by numbers in this PT-alike

Kojima and Del Toro's Silent Hills demo might be gone from PSN, but it'll live on in our traumatised memories. Luckily for us, it's also inspired – or rather scarred – swathes of developers, ensuring plenty of nasty in games to come. Layers Of Fear is just such a title, though it's certainly no jump-scare-packed clone – it's a grimly atmospheric experience in its own right.

You're behind the eyes of a tortured artist, trying to finish your masterpiece without quite the full set of mental marbles. In the process you explore your stately home, which just happens to be packed with a gallery of seriously unnerving paintings. When it comes to eyes that follow you around the room, Layers Of Fear has it down to an, er, art. Just like PT, you're abandoned without any kind of protection, only able to look and look harder as you explore the beautifully grim-but-colourful environment. It's quite an opulent home in its own way – but we're not convinced that's red paint splattered all over the floor.

Fools brush in

A creeping sense of dread is palpable throughout. Doors creak shut of their own accord, paintings warp and change to become even more bizarre and disturbing, and thunder and lightning crashes outside. And ok, yeah, there are a *couple* of jump scares, but they're the kind to leave you chilled to the bone rather than swearing at your screen. It reminded us of a twisted Gone Home, as nearly every item can be picked up as you gradually piece together the life of the central character. Sadly there's no '90s teen music though, only the echoing sounds of a gramophone and – *oh god was that footsteps*? It's in Early Access, and only about 75 percent finished, but it's already shaping up to be a suitably creepy follower of PT's legacy. ■



This impromptu nighttime game of Splatoon really got out of hand fast. Those poor squid-kids will never be the same again.



Format PC **Developer** Eteeski **ETA** 2016 **Web** http://bit.ly/gmantsim

#4 ANT SIMULATOR

It's a bug's life

Not to be confused with Will Wright's Sim Ant, this is a game that's buggy in the best possible way. Originally a Ludum Dare title crafted within 48 hours, it was so successful in its initial version that the team decided to focus on refining it into a complete release. In fact, you could say the idea really... grew legs. No? Sorry.

All from a first-person (first-ant?) perspective, you manage a full colony of the little critters, and interact with all kinds of interesting species. From the Trapjaw Ant with its bite and evade jump to the Jackjumper Ant with its nasty sting, it looks like we'll learn more about the tiny bugs than you can shake an object a thousand times your own body weight at. Digging, building, harvesting, and foraging are all part of your day to day life, and of course you have to protect your colony from other insects intent on wrecking your precious hill and eating your grubs.

Soldier on

And all of this is built in Unity 5, for ultra-realistic environments to gaze at past your wobbling mandibles. The dev team at Eteeski is also working on an Oculus Rift version, for those who've always longed for a true Honey I Shrunk The Kids experience. If virtual reality was made for anything, it was definitely this. What do you mean you already feel sick? ■

"THIS IS A GAME THAT'S BUGGY IN THE BEST POSSIBLE WAY"



Now imagine these beasties full size in virtual reality. Feeling itchy yet? Maybe even getting a little... antsy? We'll see ourselves out.

MinecraftMaster

The Most Block-busting Builds!



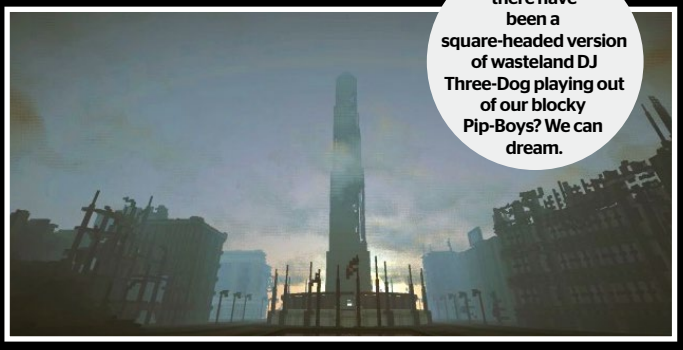
The Washington Monument is hauntingly familiar – it feels like the Brotherhood Of Steel could be lurking just nearby.

BUILD OF THE MONTH...

CAPITAL IDEA

The wasteland comes alive in a Fallout-themed map

This incredible 1:1 scale recreation of Fallout 3's Capital Wasteland was crafted over the course of two years by the architects at BlockWorks. In terms of detail and scale, this is one of the most breathtaking builds we've ever seen. The original plan, in collaboration with the modders at LostServers, was to create a full playable Fallout 3 server, complete with factions, questlines, a level-up system, bottlecap currency, and guns. Heartbreakingly, that project now seems to be on hold – following a short beta, the creators have gone quiet, and their website is down, leaving us with only dreams of wandering this wasteland remake. Sigh. At least you can still check out the trailer here: http://bit.ly/gmfalloutmc



Would there have been a square-headed version of wasteland DJ Three-Dog playing out of our blocky Pip-Boys? We can dream.



The starting town of Megaton, remade perfectly in blocks. We just want to plant a big pile of TNT and recreate that nuclear explosion...

HOW TO ... CHOOSE A PLACE TO SET UP HOME

Different biomes have different pros and cons – find your ideal locale



#1. Plain sailing

The plains are a great place to begin. Terrain is flat, tall grass can be harvested, and animals are easy to find. The only downside is a lack of wood.



#2. Your just deserts

A lack of trees, passive mobs, and water makes the desert tricky for beginners. But if your heart's set on a glass palace, there's no better source of sand.



#3. Tree-mendous

There's loads of wood to be found in the, er, woods. It's a decent spot for a house, too, once you've made a clearing. Just beware – fire spreads.



#4. Jungle is massive

Despite the vast amounts of wood on offer, jungle is a pain to navigate. If you can find a temple, that makes a good house. Otherwise, keep moving.



#5. Bog tied

Swampland is very flat, though much of it is flooded. Mushroom stew is an easy food source, as is fishing, but be careful of slimes and witch huts.



#6. Snow problem

As atmospheric as it might seem to set up in a snowy forest, you'll quickly get annoyed by wolf attacks and freezing water. Stick to warmer climes.

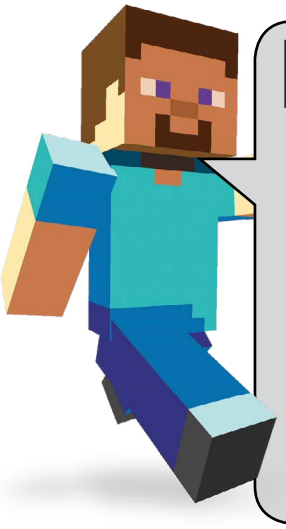
WHERE'S THE BEEF?

From cow to meat and back again

Aww, it's an adorable cow plushie. But wait! Just unzip its belly, turn it inside-out, and you've got a beef steak large enough to terrify any vegetarian. Unzip that and turn it inside-out again, and it goes back to being a cow. Confused? Vaguely unsettled? Don't worry. All you really need to know is that this bizarre beast measures five by five inches and is available now.

Shop *http://bit.ly/gmcow*
Price £29.99





STEVE'S TRIVIA

"You can hurl a healing potion at a marauding undead mob to hack off a satisfying chunk of its health."

CONSTRUCT CORNER

Warhammering it out



This Month: Roddan, Planet Minecraft

In the grim darkness of the far future, there are only huge, blocky spaceships like this one. Measuring 682 cubes in length, and about 250 tall, this seriously impressive Warhammer 40,000-inspired creation was completed in just 24 hours by veteran builder Roddan, who's also a member of the Hypixel team. "This has been on my mind almost since I started playing Minecraft back in 2011," he said. "I've always been a fan of the Warhammer universe created by Games Workshop – I feel like this is a great way to honour that!" ■

GM Reviews

The Final Verdict!

68 The Legend Of Zelda: Tri Force Heroes



Are three Links company? Or are they a crowd? We find out in this co-op dungeon puzzler.

HOW WE SCORE

0-39 Awful Avoid it as you would a bullet with your name on.
40-59 Poor Major issues here that won't be solved with a hug.
60-69 Decent A mixed bag filled with sweets and sharp stones.
70-79 Good Some flaws, but still a very enjoyable experience.
80-89 Excellent Buy it, love it, thank us when you're done.
90-100 Outstanding A rare and essential piece of brilliance.

The small print: We rate games in comparison to what else is available on the same system, in the same genre, and for the same format at the time of release. So this year's FIFA might score less than a FIFA from three years ago, but still be a better game. Because time, and our expectations, move on. Hey, you're smart, you get it...

Not awarded based simply on score, but rather given to games that possess a special blend of qualities. For instant classics that you won't regret owning.



Format XO **Publisher** Microsoft Studios **Developer** 343 Industries **ETA** Out now **Players** 1-24

HALO 5: GUARDIANS

Locke and load with Xbox One's biggest exclusive

Once upon a time in space there was a man in green armour who shot aliens. Later that initially simple tale became a little more complicated, switching perspectives, weaving in additional characters, and spanning galaxies. Now, despite this latest entry's undisputed position as Xbox One's Biggest Deal – evidenced in glitzy live action trailers, emblazoned across the shirts of MLS teams, and even cameoing in Mission Impossible: Rogue Nation as Simon Pegg's favourite game – one thing is not as clear: what is even going on in the Halo universe anymore?

The short answer is, with Chief AWOL shortly following the events of Halo 4, it's the job of Fireteam Osiris to track him down. You actually control two separate heroes here. There's Jameson Locke, leader of said squad, and Master Chief himself, who commands Blue Team on their own mission: to find rogue AI Cortana, who is... not quite herself.

Both teams consist of four Spartan super soldiers – because Halo 5 features four player campaign co-op. Unfortunately, due to the total omission of offline multiplayer, and the fact online servers weren't live before we went to press, we weren't able to test it. This review is therefore limited to just the single-player campaign. You'll find our thoughts on the co-op and multiplayer portions in next issue.

Although initially shocking to hear of a Halo game ditching split-screen play in all forms, especially since it's so integral to the series, during the campaign it's less of an issue. As unbelievable as it may sound, your computer-controlled team-mates genuinely do a great imitation job. Aiming at specific elements within the environment and pressing the D-pad up gives them orders, all of which are contextual. Point at a weapon and they pick it up; point at a turret and they man it; point to an area and they rush there; point to an enemy and they focus fire. It's a brilliantly streamlined way to introduce squad commands, while never asking you lift your fingers off the triggers.

Tough love

On normal difficulty you barely need to direct your men anyway, besides occasionally telling everyone to fire on a particularly troublesome gun emplacement, or directing them to a ledge for a photo op. They take care of themselves well, providing suppressing fire as well as a distraction for enemies. On Heroic or Legendary difficulties, however, squad commands offer an extra level of control. In one scenario, we order our team to take the low road through

"WE SMASH A WALL TO FLANK A SQUAD OF COVENANT INVESTIGATING A CRASHED DROPSHIP. SURPRISE!"

What was Microsoft's marketing budget for Halo 5? Approximately 86 squadrillion.

73 Rock Band 4



The rock never died – it was just napping. Get that plastic guitar out of storage, you're going to need it.

74 Lego Dimensions



Take a trip to a blocky paradise of superheroes, sorcerers, Simpsons, and Scooby Doo.

78 Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 5



Hoping for a worthy successor to the classic franchise? You, uh, might be disappointed.



SERIES GUIDE

Your guide to the evolving combat of Microsoft's signature shooter



Smart design underpinned Halo's lasting appeal, from its tight shooting dynamic to its two-weapon limit.



Halo 2 brought online multiplayer into the spotlight, and was Live's most popular game for years.



Scarabs were Halo 3's highlight, huge robotic enemies you could take down in a variety of creative ways.



HALO: COMBAT EVOLVED (2001)
Super soldier Master Chief (along with AI companion Cortana) crash-lands on a ringworld, where he must survive attacks from alien cultists and stop a parasite called the Flood wiping out all life in the galaxy.



HALO 2 (2004)
With the Covenant in disarray after the destruction of Halo in the first game, Master Chief teams with a disgraced Elite called the Arbiter to stop the bad guys activating more installations and causing widespread destruction.



HALO 3 (2007)
The Covenant invades Earth to activate a portal and travel to the Ark, an installation that allows their leader to remotely weaponise the Halo structures. That would cause more than a few deaths, let's say, so it's up to the Chief to scupper their plans.



HALO 4 (2012)
Four years after the events of Halo 3, Master Chief and a dying Cortana land on the planet Requiem to battle rogue Covenant forces, and a new powerful threat called the Prometheans, warriors of the Forerunner empire.

a rocky canyon as we go high and fire down, enabling us to cover multiple angles. Wide, tall maps facilitate team play, filled with special walls which can be broken through to find new routes. In one area we smash an eggshell-looking surface to ambush a squad of Covenant investigating a crashed dropship. Surprise! On another occasion, we charge through a slatted panel in an opulent dwelling and ascend some secret stairs to gain the high ground.

You can even tell team-mates which vehicle to drive, which leads to a thrilling moment in which our Warthog is pummelled by encroaching forces, only for backup to arrive on a Scorpion tank and blow them all away. And when we each hop onto conveniently placed Ghosts (as satisfying a vehicle to ride as ever) and zoom off like a badass crew of space bikers, there's the brilliant sensation of an epic co-op game, even without the human element tagging alongside every step of the way.

"OUR VICTORIOUS SPARTANS HOP IN GHOSTS AND ZOOM OFF LIKE A BADASS CREW OF SPACE BIKERS"

This is true with the revival mechanic, too. Now, instead of dying, you drop to all fours, giving your buddies a ten-second window to help. They sometimes need picking up too, but you won't fail if you don't reach them in time – they simply stay down until all the enemies are clear, then dust themselves off. Pressing X when downed calls them over, and unless you tumble off a ledge or get vaporised, you can repeat the process indefinitely. It doesn't remove the penalty for recklessness, merely changes it from dying and restarting to a short 'time out', thereby maintaining a solid pace.

It's one of many adjustments that make this the fastest Halo. Your movement is more agile than ever, Spartans able to sprint indefinitely, dash with LB, slide on their knees, clamber up ledges, ram by performing a melee as they sprint, *and* briefly hover in the air if they aim while jumping. It's almost like sci-fi parkour – combat in constant motion.

Pillar of awesome

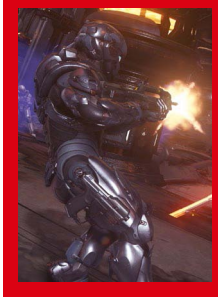
Despite this it still feels quintessentially Halo, the realisation of the nimble-yet-powerful super soldier you've always believed Spartans are. 343 Industries really has skirmishes down to a fine art, layering up different combinations of weapons and enemies like a decadent trifle. One minute you're crawling between cover in a sprawling quarry as Promethean snipers pin you down, and the next you're dealing out payback against yelping Grunts with a fuel rod cannon. Small ammo clips prevent you from sticking with the same weapon for too long, forcing you to pick up ones you otherwise wouldn't, and taking encounters over multiple ranges and angles. No section outstays its welcome, a constant procession of new experiences that flat-out refuse to be anything other than supremely fun.

Every weapon and foe is there for a reason. Weak armour on Promethean Commanders has to be pinpointed through scopes, for example, while less intimidating Promethean Knights can be overloaded with a close-up burst from an automatic weapon. Covenant suicide Grunts arm plasma grenades and charge, while Jackals move in slowly with shields raised. Thanks to the merciful exclusion of those execrable Flood, these bugs and bots are satisfying to shoot.

While returning Halo players will have some idea of what to expect – there's the

INSTANT EXPERT

How to move with poise and grace



1 Both Master Chief and Jameson Locke are more agile Spartans than ever. The first move you want to learn is the ol' shoulder charge. Simply melee as you sprint and you trigger a third-person attack that can break through certain walls to open new routes, and knock foes flying.

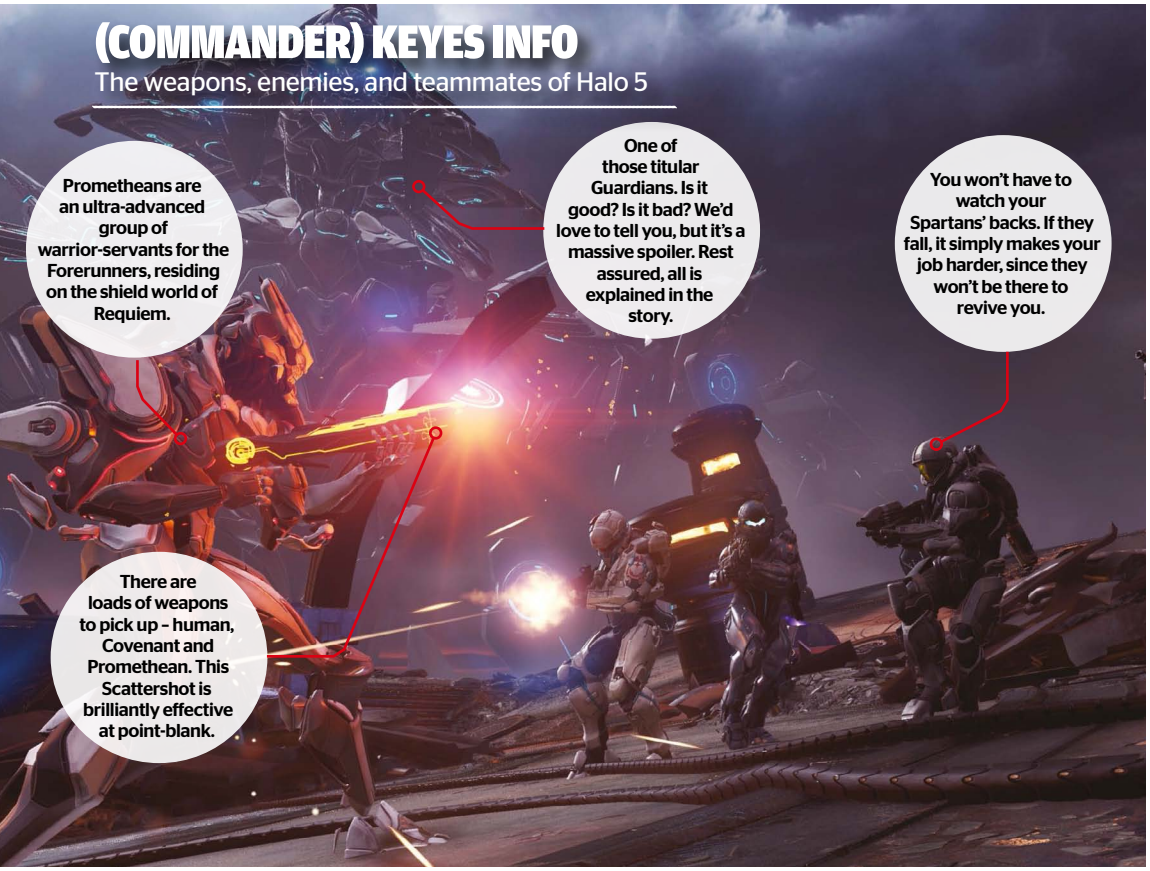
2 By using iron sights while jumping, you burn your jetpack thrusters and hover in the air for a few seconds, providing a high angle from which you can shoot down on enemies. This is especially useful in keeping off the ground when Promethean Crawlers swarm in.

3 A vital ability is the boost-dash that enables you to circle strafe at speed. This excels at getting to Hunters' rears, and the weak parts of Promethean Knights, and – brilliantly – can be used in any direction at any height. It takes a few seconds to recharge, so use wisely.

4 Chief and Locke are almost identical in terms of abilities, apart from one Chief-specific move. If you duck while sprinting, he slides on his knees for a second, which is good for... not much, other than blasting an Elite in the groin while shouting something witty.

(COMMANDER) KEYES INFO

The weapons, enemies, and teammates of Halo 5



Warthog section, the flying level, the miniboss arena, the bit where a wave of small weak enemies charge and you one-shot them Doom-style – there are still surprises. A section in which you roam around a civilian hub listening in on conversations offers a nice change of pace (look out for two guys in a corner arguing over the plural of mongoose) and, without spoiling too much, there's also the chance to fight alongside a familiar face.

Buck yeah

The campaign's callbacks will fly over the heads of new players, and that's Halo 5's biggest problem. The story feels like a side escapade set in the Halo world, rather than the galaxy-spanning showstopper the series deserves, more rescue mission than epic invasion arc, and you need to know your lore to come away not thoroughly confused. It at least feels bigger than Halo 4, which was mostly a lonely, single Spartan affair. Your teams are a constant reassuring presence here, bringing warmth and humanity to otherwise cold alien worlds. Nathan Fillion's wise-cracking Buck ("If we get out of this alive I'll buy the whole bar") is a particular highlight.

With a cliffhanger ending, this so-called Reclaimer Saga is unlikely to ever satiate you from a story perspective – Halo 5 raises more questions than it answers – but playing it is another matter. Battles are a near-perfect test of skill and creativity, with effortless movement, satisfying weapons, and enemies you never tire of shooting. It's familiar, yet with enough new features to feel fresh. Let's hope next month's online test brings even more angelic news. ■



GM LOVES...

- 60 frames-per-second and absolutely stunning to behold.
- Weapons feel weighty, and enemies are always fun to shoot.

GM HATES...

- There's no split-screen co-op or multiplayer. None. What?
- The story requires a lot of previous Halo knowledge.

Better than...



Halo 4
For all its strengths, Halo 4 always felt pretty lonely and confined. Halo 5, by happy contrast, gives us eight chatty Spartans as company.

Worse than...



Halo: Reach
Taking place on a single gorgeous world, Reach's story is more cohesive and focused, and it remains an all-time high point for the green machine.

ONLINE



Unfortunately we weren't able to play the multiplayer, but we'll be giving it an exhaustive test for next month, to make sure there's no The Master Chief Collection-esque online woes.

GM JUDGEMENT

92%



Although the story feels less of an event, Halo 4's campaign is a throughly satisfying spectacle.
Ben Griffin



Sometimes a problem has multiple solutions. Why dodge giant snowballs, when you can use fire to melt them?

Format 3DS **Publisher** Nintendo **Developer** Nintendo EPD, Grezzo **ETA** Out now **Players** 1 or 3

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TRI FORCE HEROES

A stylish but spotty spin-off that defies the Hyrule of three

Coordinating a plan with two people is easy. And we're pretty familiar with the squad dynamics of a group of four. But a three-strong team? That's a little more unusual – and potentially a little messier, too. Here we have a Zelda game built around the idea of marshalling a triumvirate of Links – and the chaos that results isn't always as well-organised as you'd hope.

Not that you'd predict any problems after a breezy, confident introduction establishes Tri Force Heroes as a lightly comic romp rather than a serious-minded adventure. It takes place in the fashion-obsessed kingdom of Hytopia, with a witch cursing the fabulously chic Princess Styla to a life wearing dull brown bodysuits. The king – whose anguished howls make him sound like a sad ghost – invites heroes to venture out into the Drablands to retrieve the materials for a local designer to tailor a new dress for the now-reclusive princess. It's disarmingly silly, and executed with such sprightly assurance that you'll be convinced you're in for a good time. But what follows isn't nearly so sure-footed.

On the face of things, it's two games in one. You're told the Drablands are too dangerous to tackle alone, so lone players must take two Doppels along with them. These statuesque Linkalikes can be controlled directly: our hero can simply tap their icon on the touchscreen to transport his soul into these empty vessels. In practice, it's never quite as clever as you'd hope. You can stack the three into a totem in order to access higher switches or reach weak points on bosses that are too high for a lone Link to reach. Otherwise, it's usually a simple matter of guiding all three Links to the exit: Red might grapple across a pit before tossing a boomerang to pull Green and Blue over to join him, or distract an enemy long enough for Blue to fire an arrow into its rear, but that's about as elaborate as it gets. There's the occasional set-piece to make you think, such as a perilous crossing over tilting platforms with a statue to carry, or a tricksy puzzle with colour-coded platforms that the 'wrong' Link will fall through – but they're too few and far between.

"THERE'S NO ROOM FOR WEAK LINKS, PARTICULARLY DURING THE STRINGENT TIMED CHALLENGES"

Three cheers

Things improve when two other players are involved. Ostensibly, this would seem to make things much simpler, but you'd be surprised how difficult it can be to get everyone on the same page, not least with everyone sharing both a life meter *and* an energy gauge. If one of you is spamming bombs on the other side of the screen, you might not be able to loose off an arrow at that pursuing mummy, and with just eight hearts between three of you, things can go south pretty quickly. In local



COSTUME QUEST

Become a dedicated follower of fashion

Each stage completed grants a material reward. Literally. At the end of a level, you'll get to open one of three chests containing items that are used to make new outfits. Some increase your life, others buff weapons, and a Tingle leotard allows you to survive up to three falls without losing a heart. However, the random nature of the rewards means you can complete a stage several times without getting the item you need. Replaying a level while pursuing an optional objective often increases your chances, but after a few of attempts you'll be so familiar with its idiosyncrasies that you'll have no need for an outfit that makes it easier anyway.





The 3D effect really brings out the best in a crisp art style that can look a little bland in static shots.



A village shop and a daily chance stall give you more opportunities to get the materials you need for outfits.

How loudly did Chris tut when the game promised "less rewards" for skipping stages rather than "fewer"? It was deafening.

play – the entire game is available through single-cart multiplayer, though anyone without their own copy is limited to the standard hero garb – it veers between the sublime and the ridiculous. During heated encounters or the more perilous platforming sequences you'll be frenziedly bellowing instructions at one another. When there's an environmental puzzle to solve, you'll often find one player taking charge and sighing wearily as the other two don't quite do as they're told.

Oddly, that frustration is baked into the design when playing online, and even more bizarrely, it leads to some of the game's best moments. With voice chat disabled, you're forced to communicate by tapping a series of on-screen icons, cajoling your allies to follow you, inviting them to hoik you up onto their shoulders, and directing them to throw you – or whatever else they might currently be holding. You can register displeasure or delight, and celebrate collective triumphs by tapping the picture that casts Link as a cheerleader, gleefully thrusting the pom-poms in his hands skyward. It's genuinely satisfying when a plan comes together, though after a while you'll notice the thinking time decreasing as your team collectively catches wise to what's being asked of it.

Linked in

That's partly down to familiarity. The structure may be different – each of the 32 stages is split into four discrete sections – but the ideas are often recycled from previous Zeldas. The need for teamwork gives some old concepts a fresh context, but the game's toolset offers nothing we haven't seen before, and its vocabulary is equally limited. Routine has always been a part of Zelda and we wouldn't want the series to lose those links to its past, but it's usually found a way to shake them up. You mightn't be on your own this time, but if you've played any Zelda game before, too frequently it'll feel like you're going through the motions. That's not always the case, mind. With one or two frustratingly finicky exceptions, the boss fights are Tri Force Heroes at its best, combining dexterity and strategy, and making each player feel equally important. Some riff on old encounters, but most feel thrillingly new.

It's a more substantial proposition than you're probably expecting, too, particularly once you factor in the additional objectives for each stage. Not that everyone will want to replay each level another three times, of course, but some challenges manage to invigorate the more sedate levels. Whether you're charged with beating a boss with just four hearts, or negotiating a previously straightforward level with the lights out, there's plenty here for the committed player. That said, there's no room for weak Links, particularly during the startlingly stringent timed challenges: a well-oiled team might be able to cope, but for solo players, a few of those 128 slots on the level completion screen will require a good deal of patience to fill.

With bags of unlockable costumes, an arena battle mode, and a bright village hub containing some charming secrets, there's much to admire here. But however you play it, Tri Force Heroes frequently feels like a compromise: forced to simultaneously cater to the needs of the lone player and the three-man team. For all its effervescent spirit, it lacks the coherence and consistency we've come to expect from one of Nintendo's most venerated series; not so much Tri Force as Tri Hard. ■

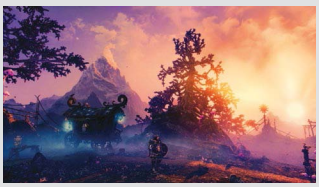
GM LOVES...

- The cheerful, vibrant tone makes it a hard game to dislike.
- Fighting the game's bosses as a team is brilliant fun.

GM HATES...

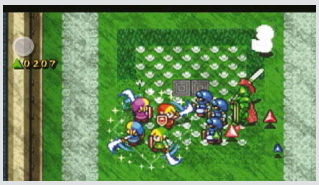
- Some objectives are frustratingly fiddly to do alone.
- Too many of the ideas here are recycled from previous games.

Better than...



Trine 3
Three heroes solve puzzles and fight together – but where Frozenbyte's threequel is all too abrupt, Nintendo's game is compact yet generous.

Worse than...



The Legend of Zelda: Four Swords Adventures
One of the best co-op games ever made. A tough act to follow, despite its limiting hardware requirements.

ONLINE



Online play is lag-free, and you can post pictures of your adventures in the Drablands to the Miiverse. A clown in the village hub suggests Spotpass functionality is coming soon, too.

GM JUDGEMENT

70%



Uneven but occasionally inspired, this multiplayer jaunt is ultimately a minor entry in the franchise.
Chris Schilling



Screen-filling explosions are commonplace, but the harlequin pixel-art is both charming and readable.







Format PS4, XO, PC (reviewed) **Publisher** Team17 **Developer** Self Made Miracle **ETA** Out now **Players** 1-2

PENARIUM

Clowning around in the cirque du slaughter

This frantic platformer bears comparison to some of the indie greats of recent years. In terms of core mechanics, Dutch developer Self Made Miracle has taken its cues from arcade gem Super Crate Box, recreating that game's compulsive blend of speedy 2D traversal and panicky high-score chasing, and in multiplayer, it evokes the pace and tension of a heated Towerfall tournament. Those are some lofty comparisons, to be sure, but it almost stands shoulder to shoulder with these 2D titans. Almost.

The game's single-player campaign kicks off with our youthful protagonist abducted by a vaudevillian villain and forced to perform in a sadistic circus for bloodthirsty punters. The game's brutal big top is home to all manner of traps and weapons, you see, and the crowd's paid good money to watch you stand up to an onslaught of rocket launchers, Gatling guns, and water cannons.

But seeing as you're a fragile wee thing with no offensive abilities to speak of, your only option is to embrace the creeping sense of panic as you double-jump your way past the hail of bullets and bombs. It's a fine introduction to the mechanics of the game, but Penarium's campaign mode is really a sort of extended tutorial, providing 30 stages of basic training interspersed with occasional flashes of inspired gimmickry.

Clown load

The main event of this variegated game is the arcade mode, which challenges you to nab as many collectable barrels as possible before succumbing to the onslaught. Grab one, and another will appear somewhere else in the arena, forcing you to frequently abandon safe spaces in pursuit of high-scores. What's more, for every five barrels you collect, the level's traps and armaments will rearrange themselves, ensuring that no single strategy will endure for more than 30 seconds or so.

"YOUR ONLY OPTION IS TO EMBRACE THE PANIC AND JUMP PAST THE HAIL OF BULLETS AND BOMBS"

At one moment you might be dodging heat-seeking missiles from the top of the screen while sharpened icicles spring from the bottom. The next, you'll be fleeing from bouncing bowling balls and rising water. One or two less-than-stellar obstacles dampen the excitement now and then, but Penarium is reliably unpredictable, rambunctious fun. A selection of power-ups add even more chaos into the mix, offering temporary advantages such as increased speed or mobility, as well as other, more exotic bonuses, including the ability to jump on clouds or simply fly around the level.

Penarium's brand of twitchy intensity is at its best in the two-man multiplayer modes. Co-op implements smart tweaks to the core arcade experience, demanding coordination, timing, and teamwork rather than sheer dexterity. It is, as you'd expect, a recipe for arguments. The competitive mode, meanwhile, is a simple but uproarious experience, enlivened considerably by the ability to stun your adversary with a bounce on the bonce, leaving them at the mercy of some deadly trap or other.

Penarium can't quite boast the balance and depth of Super Crate Box or Towerfall, and it lacks the longevity of other arcade arenas, but this circus puts on a spectacular show nonetheless – one well worth the price of admission. ■

Alright, alright, here's your circus pun-based assessment: It's a trapeze-y recommendation.

GM LOVES...

- The core mechanics are pacey and brilliantly simple.
- Dodging the deadly traps is a nervous thrill.
- Competitive multiplayer is a friendship-breaking blast.

GM HATES...

- Certain obstacles are just far less exciting than others.

Better than...



Dustforce
This sweeping title sure does look the part, but its platforming mechanics could never quite live up to its art style. Penarium is more exciting all round.

Worse than...



Super Crate Box
It may be single player only, but SCB can't be beat in terms of its masterful balance and superb gameplay. And you can grab it free on Steam!

2ND OPINION



"I must admit that Penarium's longevity will likely boil down to how often you plan to play with mates. I found the single player excursions wore thin fairly sharpish, though whenever I hear screams of mid-match mirth from around the office, I can't help but join in."
Matt Sakuraoka-Gilman, Editor

GM JUDGEMENT

83%



A fast-paced test of nerve and skill, Penarium offers all the fun of the fair in single- or multiplayer.
James Nouch



Format Wii U **Publisher** Nintendo **Developer** Koei Tecmo Games **ETA** Out now **Players** 1

PROJECT ZERO: MAIDEN OF BLACK WATER

Time to give up the ghost

The J-horror series is back. After the last main entry, Mask Of The Lunar Eclipse, never made it outside of Japan, we wondered whether we'd ever see it return to our fair shores. Perhaps Nintendo and Koei Tecmo knew we'd struggle to resist the lure of wielding the Wii U's gamepad as a camera. It's certainly an appealing prospect – sending ghosts back from whence they came by physically taking photos of them, like a demonic, motion-controlled Pokémon Snap. Sadly in reality it doesn't quite work.

Conceptually, the combat is great – more damage is dealt if you wait until the last moment before a ghost attacks, a system designed to make you hold your nerve until it's almost too late. At first, it's genuinely engaging, but after hours of spectre-snapping, you realise there's no real progression to the strategy – you'll be tackling the final boss with much the same technique as you apply to the first few ghosts you encounter, albeit with better equipment. And while its cumbersome gyro controls are technically optional, the thumbstick movement isn't responsive enough to offer a reasonable alternative. When ghouls appear at all angles the fear factor is completely negated as you're too busy fighting with the controls.

Snap happy

In fact, the game's attempts to scare you fall quite flat throughout, even when played in a darkened room with headphones on. Environments are heavily repeated until all sense of mystery is lost, and the few scares that do exist are comparatively limp and predictable. It's disappointing that at its most tense moments the game almost always takes control away from you to play a cutscene, which completely breaks any building atmosphere. The overarching story is weak too – it pulls out every cliché in the book, and while there's a sort of B-movie charm to that, it's too po-faced to be enjoyable as horror satire, and not well written enough to be taken seriously. Much of the narrative, centered on a mountain that's become a notorious suicide spot, is told through expositional dialogue, character visions/nightmares and (groan) collectable notes. Why does everyone in this game write down their every thought? And its one unique selling point – that getting wet connects you closer to ghosts, making you more vulnerable – just feels like an excuse to make the female lead's skin-tight clothes go a bit see-through.

It's not entirely devoid of fun – for those willing to overlook its flaws there're elements to enjoy. Despite the combat's problems, photographing a ghost just as it's about to land a deadly blow is satisfying stuff; there're moments of great cinematography and suspense in some cutscenes; and though the story is drenched in cliché, it does have a cracking villain in the titular maiden.

Its biggest problem is how dated it feels, relying on mechanics that felt fresh on PS2, but collapse when held up to modern standards. It's no longer acceptable to use clumsy controls to create panic (and it fails there anyway, creating frustration instead), or to present so little variety in the gameplay. What this series needs is a fresh take – what it's got here is a tired also-ran. ■

"AT ITS MOST TENSE MOMENTS, THE GAME TAKES CONTROL AWAY, BREAKING THE ATMOSPHERE"

Did this game make Alex want a new Pokémon Snap? He can't lie – any game with a camera in it does.

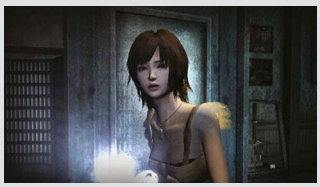
GM LOVES...

- The first few chapters are available completely free.

GM HATES...

- Limp jump scares make this the least spooky entry yet.
- Looks and feels like a creaky ten year old throwback.
- When you're wet the ghosts are more powerful? What?

Better than...



Project Zero: Mask Of The Lunar Eclipse
Because, well, at least we got to play this one in a language that more than one member of the team can speak.

Worse than...



Resident Evil: Revelations
Another scare-a-thon on Wii U, but with all the responsive controls, meaty combat, and genuine horror this lacks.

NEED TO KNOW



The game's first hour is available as a trial version, for those who are undecided. Be warned, though, that after those opening chapters, the boredom of repetition really starts to set in.

GM JUDGEMENT

57%

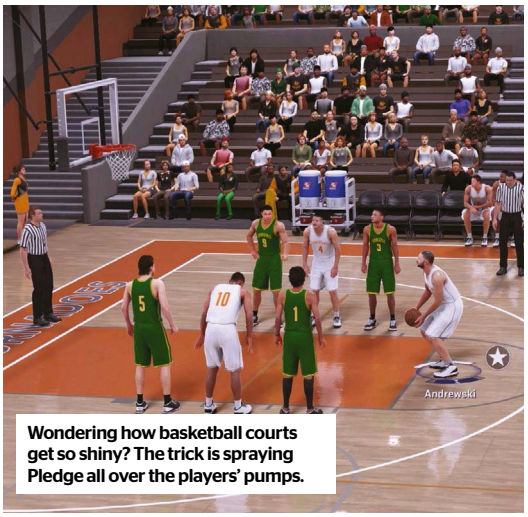


What might've been an impressive title 10-15 years ago feels creaky and dull in a modern context.
Alex Jones

GM Review

The Final Verdict!





Wondering how basketball courts get so shiny? The trick is spraying Pledge all over the players' pumps.





Format PS4 (reviewed), XO, PC **Publisher** 2K **Developer** Visual Concepts **ETA** Out now **Players** 1-4

NBA 2K16

It's time to get your Freq on

What's in a name? Well, quite a lot if you have to go through an entire game saddled with "Frequency Vibrations". No, that's not a naff night club in Romford, but actually the handle you'll be taking on in NBA 2K16's cinematic story.

It's this refreshed take on the career mode that serves as the series' major new feature, taking the kind of free and open approach you'd encounter in pretty much every sports sim you can think of – from football to cricket, rugby to tennis – and turning it into something scripted and confined. Rather than letting you play your way up through the ranks to a starring position in the NBA, developer Visual Concepts has attempted to do something bold, turning matches into mere pages in the story that is your rise to super stardom. It is, in short, an attempt to inject some narrative into what could easily be a very plain sports sim, and that sense of ambition should be applauded. The end result, however, is unfortunately more likely to be derided.

Employing the talents of film director Spike Lee, NBA 2K16 takes Frequency Vibrations – or Freq, pronounced 'freak', for short – up through the ranks, from high school star to college starter and, eventually, household name in the NBA. As a result, your rise to glory is one conducted largely on rails, with the number of games you'll play in each season already laid out – just four in your opening college run, for instance. Cut-scenes and even interviews with family members are then injected into the action to encase play in some kind of rags-to-riches story. The big problem is, however, that the story Lee is so desperate to tell is really, really dumb.

Freq show

Commentators – of which there are many – spend most games talking up your prowess, yet in reality Freq's early steps are very much baby ones and, until you move on through play (or pay to upgrade his abilities from day one), they really don't match up with his big billing. Likewise, the cut-scenes, which mainly focus on the activities of his twin sister and his best friend Vic Van Lier, are incredibly painful.

The script is pure American cheese, with dialogue playing out like a teacher attempting to be 'down with the kids' on non-uniform day by revealing their hidden tattoo. It's cringe-worthy nonsense where 'street speak' and mild misogyny are both bandied around in order to win favour with you, the supposedly young and hip gamer.

Put all this aside, however, and what you have underneath is undeniably a consummate and especially slick basketball sim. On the court NBA 2K16 is everything you'd hope for, with even European teams now thrown into the melting pot, while the game's replication of TV coverage – including half time punditry and post match interviews – is something to behold. Indeed, there's a lot the likes of FIFA could learn from the way Visual Concepts has set about showcasing the ins and outs of the way its sport hits the small screen.

Nevertheless, the car crash that is the career mode is a major dent in this otherwise solid package, with Spike Lee's attempt at a slam dunk missing the hoop by quite a distance. ■

"THE PROBLEM IS THAT THE STORY SPIKE LEE IS SO DESPERATE TO TELL IS REALLY, REALLY DUMB"

How many times did Keith feel painfully English and uncool during career mode? Every time Freq and friends opened their mouths.

GM LOVES...

- From high school basketball to the NBA, this is the full package.
- European teams such as Bayern Munich and Barca add depth.

GM HATES...

- It's got a script that's cheesier than a fondued wotsit.
- The story bears little relation to your actual performance.

Better than...



NBA Live 15
Basketball is one sport where EA doesn't rule the roost, and Live's glitchy gameplay leaves it some way behind 2K's franchise.

Worse than...



NBA 2K15
When it comes to on the court action, NBA 2K16 arguably has the edge over its predecessor, but the career mode in last year's release is leagues better.

NEED TO KNOW



All of the cutscenes in play were filmed by real actors with motion censor gubbins strapped to their faces. All that realism sadly doesn't deflect from the bad acting and terrible dialogue, however.

GM JUDGEMENT

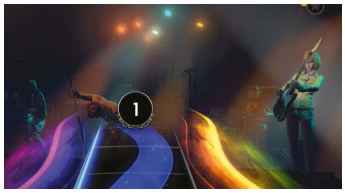
68%



An overly restrictive and often embarrassing career mode undermines the excellent gameplay.
Keith Andrew



Play what you like during Freestyle Guitar Solos, but follow the prompts if you want to maintain your multiplier.







Format PS4 (reviewed), XO **Publisher** Harmonix **Developer** Harmonix **ETA** Out now **Players** 1-6

ROCK BAND 4

Keep on rockin' in the free(style) world

At first glance, you'd be forgiven for thinking little has changed in the five years since Rock Band 3. Each song's guitar, bass, drum, and vocal sections are still broken down into colourful prompts, which you need to match with your chosen plastic peripheral to keep that part of the track alive. However, dig deeper and you find new gameplay elements, focused on improvisation, that fundamentally upgrade the experience of performing in your virtual band.

Take Dynamic Drum Fills, which are drawn from a large set of pre-made flourishes, and improve upon RB3's 'make up your own' approach by providing actual beats to follow. If you prefer singing, Freestyle Vocals enables the fulfilment of myriad mic-rocking fantasies by belting out your own lyrics – so long as you remain in the same key as the backing track.

The biggest addition comes in the form of Freestyle Guitar Solos, where a new set of simple prompts lets you generate impressive-sounding licks without following specific notes. By varying strumming speed and mixing up button sequences, you're able to express yourself in a way never before seen (or heard) in rhythm action games. Appropriately, Freestyle Guitar Solos only feature on tracks that already have a solo section, but there is a separate 'cheat' mode which allows you to play freestyle for the entire length of the song, should you want to experiment. (And you will.)

Shreddy Van Halen

In Go On Tour mode you get to design your own band, then steer it through a choose-your-own-adventure-style story full of amusing choices and outcomes. Playing shows with set tracks earns cash for new gear, while selecting your own playlists attracts new fans and opens up exclusive showcases. These tangible outcomes make every single performance feel important.

"GO ON TOUR MODE'S TANGIBLE OUTCOMES MAKE EVERY SINGLE PERFORMANCE FEEL IMPORTANT"

Play A Show adds a twist to Quickplay by introducing a voting mechanic, where each band-mate gets to vote on the set's next songs. Unfortunately the outcome is chosen at random, so the least popular option still gets picked on occasions, annoying the rest of the band.

The 65 tracks included on-disc range from Aerosmith to The Who, and though some aren't the bands' biggest hits, it's enough to keep you playing for the first week or two. Exhaust these and there's still the Music Store, where over 1,700 legacy DLC tracks are already available. More than half of these have had Freestyle Guitar Solos and Dynamic Drum Fills added as necessary, and anything previously purchased can be brought over at no extra cost.

Improvements have been made with new peripherals, which feel more solid and responsive – but the best news for returning players is that any existing wireless instruments you have can be used within the same console family. Either plug the receiver dongles into your PS4, or use the adaptor for Xbox One, and your old kit is given a new lease of life. With an unprecedented level of support for legacy instruments and DLC, as well as some killer new gameplay features, Rock Band 4 is a must-have for both More Than A Feeling veterans and Cedarwood Road newcomers. ■

How long did it take Iain to find a willing singer for his virtual band? He's still looking...

GM LOVES...

- Freestyle Guitar Solos rock, and make every gig unique.
- Huge back catalogue of tracks available to boost your library.
- Legacy controller support to revive your existing instruments.

GM HATES...

- No video recording option to share your best performances.

Better than...



Rock Band 3
The series was already nearing perfection at this point, though gameplay still stuck rigidly to precise button-matching.

Worse than...



Being in a band
Putting on a show in your living room is great fun, but it still falls short of actually tearing up the stage at a gig. We've been there. Maybe.

NEED TO KNOW



This will be the only Rock Band game released on current-gen systems, and update patches for new features (which may include online play) are already being worked on.

GM JUDGEMENT

91%



The definitive entry in a hall of fame series, raising the bar for rhythm action games to an all-time high.
Iain Wilson



It takes more than a wizard and a dinosaur to faze Homer. Dude's been to space.









Format PS4 (reviewed), XO, WII U, PS3, 360 **Publisher** Warner Bros **Developer** Traveller's Tales **ETA** Out now **Players** 1-2

LEGO DIMENSIONS

Stop us if you've heard this one – Batman, Gollum, and Shaggy walk into a portal...



Whether small or big kid, it's hard not to be won over by the sight of Homer running over Flanders in a spinning TARDIS, or Batman flagging down Dorothy's posse outside the Emerald City and growling "You're coming with me, Scarecrow". All your favourite people joyfully interacting with each other – it's like the opposite of a family reunion.

The gathering is certainly costly, however. To play Lego Dimensions you need an £80 starter pack, which includes Gandalf, Wyldstyle, and Batman figures, the Batmobile, a Toy Pad, and the game itself. As in Skylanders and Disney Infinity, you place models on a base and, as if by magic, they instantly appear on screen – but what sets Dimensions apart is its gleeful construction.

Each additional level pack, priced at around £29, contains a figure, two vehicles, and a world. The likes of Chell's Companion Cube and turret, Homer's TV and car, and Marty McFly's hoverboard and DeLorean, come with pages of glossy instructions. That's where the fun lies, the virtual world snaking through the physical one.

Sometimes you'll have to steer your character through paint and then move their model to the corresponding colour on the Toy Pad, or place them on different portions of it to warp through portals. At one point Lex Luthor freezes one half of it, so you have to quickly shift your figures to the other. This can get old depending on your set-up, though – it's clearly designed around the cross-legged child sitting in front of the TV, rather than the fully-grown couch potato kicking back on their sofa.

It's all in an effort to stop Gary Oldman's Lord Vortech pilfering macguffins from different worlds and ruling over one ultimate mono-branded universe. Building is actually unnecessary – as long as you slap the microchip-embedded disc on the Toy Pad, it won't sense Gimli's missing head – but you'll be cheating yourself if you don't. With the Lego games running for almost a decade now, this is the first time they've been directly paired with physical sets, and it makes complete sense – there's something undeniably satisfying about constructing pop culture icons brick by brick.

Stud-y buddy

World design borrows from predecessors, however, and the puzzles are familiar, typically involving smashing things and rebuilding them, or chucking projectiles at switches. Death is a minor inconvenience, sapping studs rather than dealing out game-over screens.

Don't expect a challenge so much as a character showcase: Cyborg melts gold using red-hot lasers, Scooby Doo digs for

treasure, and Gollum skulks through vents to hidden areas. These extra figures cost of course, and since they're only really used to unlock chests holding gold bricks or solve 30 second long character-specific sections, £29 is a lot to ask. When you're plonking Owen Grady on the Toy Pad to track footprints, then deploying Scooby Doo to dig for the treasure – a combined £58 worth of Lego – these feel more like paywalls than puzzles. That's what you get when a space needs to accommodate 30 different purchasable characters.

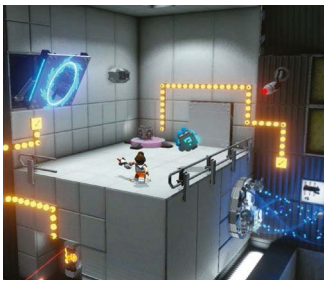
But there's more to packs than that. Most contain an open world in which to complete short missions and restore structures. Feeding Jurassic World's Mosasaur a giant turkey, rounding up Wheatley's defective turrets, revving the Batmobile around Arkham Asylum, and escorting Hans Moleman home, is great fun, even if there's only about an hour of play in each world.

More focused story content also features in most packs (look for a yellow marking on the box), stuffed with gag-filled cinematics. It's up to you what optional extras you buy, but Chell's bundle in particular is brilliant, a bite-sized Portal sequel in which you use inertia, momentum, and excursion funnels to navigate Aperture Science's test chambers, as Cave Johnson and GLaDOS provide the laughs (the passive-aggressive AI tells you how she baked you a cake using emulsion gel and sawdust because she ran out of ingredients). Homer Simpson's mission is another highlight, using audio from the show to recreate the classic chilli vision quest episode as a trippy adventure.

WORLD TOUR

Travelling to other lands

Every character you purchase comes with a free-roam world in which to collect items and complete short quests, and some packs even come with linear story missions, indicated by a yellow marking on the pack. Any character can visit any location – so you can finally live your dream of roaming Springfield on a velociraptor.



1 Aperture Science's puzzles have been simplified by Wheatley – because he was too dim to solve them.



2 Speed around Hill Valley on a hoverboard or in the DeLorean in Marty McFly's Back To The Future set.



3 The Springfield's sandbox suffers from a strange lack of voices, but the story mission is excellent.



4 Follow the 'Lego Brick Road' to Wizard Of Oz world, where The Wicked Witch awaits.



5 Ninjago's Master Chen has filled his secret island with fiendish challenges to overcome.

"A GAME THAT LETS YOU STICK LEGOLAS IN A COP CAR IS ALL ABOUT BREAKING THE RULES"

Certain character pairings trigger different interactions. Get Gandalf and The Wicked Witch together on the Toy Pad, and he'll tell her to tone down the wickedness a tad as she's "giving magic-wielding folk a bad name". Wyldstyle welcomes Wonder Woman with a "Hey girl, how are things with Superman?". And Chris Pratt characters collide when The Lego Movie's Emmet tells Jurassic World's Owen Grady that he seems "awfully familiar." The sheer amount of cheesy quotage sometimes threatens to reduce characters down to a soundbite, but universe clashes make fanboy squeals practically guaranteed.

Brick magnet

Customisable vehicles add value to packs, and each physical model has three different forms to build. Emmet's excavator, for example, transforms into a bulldozer with a little reshuffling. In-game you can use studs to buy upgrades, buffing the health of Cyborg's mech or changing the colour scheme of Wonder Woman's invisible jet. Flying often breaks levels – like when you bypass a lava puzzle by zooming over it on a broomstick – but then, a game that lets you stick Legolas in a cop car should be all *about* breaking the rules.

Dimensions' true genius is making its Toy Pad big enough to fit seven simultaneous characters, making the pull of Ghostbusters, DC, The Simpsons, Tolkien, and more hard to resist. Racing through The Lego Movie's Cloud Cuckoo Land as Marty McFly on a velociraptor with Gollum, Batman, and Doctor Who in tow proves that some games are for kids, and some games make you feel like one. An entry price of £80 for the Starter Pack and £29 for subsequent characters and worlds is not cheap though, especially when you factor in, you know, other games you might want to buy.

Dimensions' attempts to justify its cost with physical items that are as much fun to assemble as they are to use in-game, but never quite manages it. Spend the minimum amount and your experience feels hobbled; spend more and the content struggles to justify the skyrocketing cost. It's a shame, as the quality is undeniable. Pop culture fans, time to start sweating. ■



CLEAR AS STUDS

Scouring the multiverse of shiny Danish junk

Get your collecting shoes on as there's plenty to hunt for here. Studs are most plentiful, and come in silver, gold, blue, and purple flavours. You use these to upgrade vehicles – giving the Batmobile mines and a speed boost, for instance. There are also red bricks which unlock cheats, and minikits and gold bricks to boost up your completion rating.

GM LOVES...

- Constructing each iconic figure and their vehicle is a joy.
- A wonderful take on a whole spectrum of classic series.

GM HATES...

- Paying £29 for each character pack will bleed you dry.
- Constantly needing to swap out figures on the Toy Pad is a chore.

Better than...



Disney Infinity 3.0

Disney has arguably the bigger brands, but Dimensions has more, and far less qualms with combining them, making it feel like the rowdier party.

Worse than...



Lego Marvel Super Heroes

Just as quality as Dimensions, but a lack of physical collectibles makes it whole lot cheaper to play through.

NEED TO KNOW

The absolute bare minimum you'll spend to play is £80 for the Starter Pack. This gives you access to DC, Lord Of The Rings, and The Lego Movie sandboxes, and the main story. Want everything else? It's over £300 total.



GM JUDGEMENT

85%



A masterful mash-up – but if you want to see everything on offer, it'll cost you an arm and a Lego.

Ben Griffin

What did Ben do with all those spare Lego pieces? He built himself a life-sized portal. He hasn't been seen since...

SAVE UP TO 57%

AND

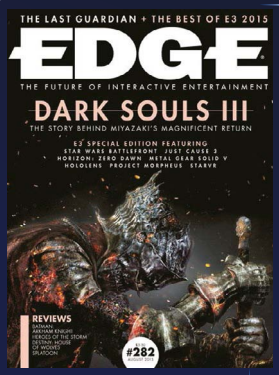
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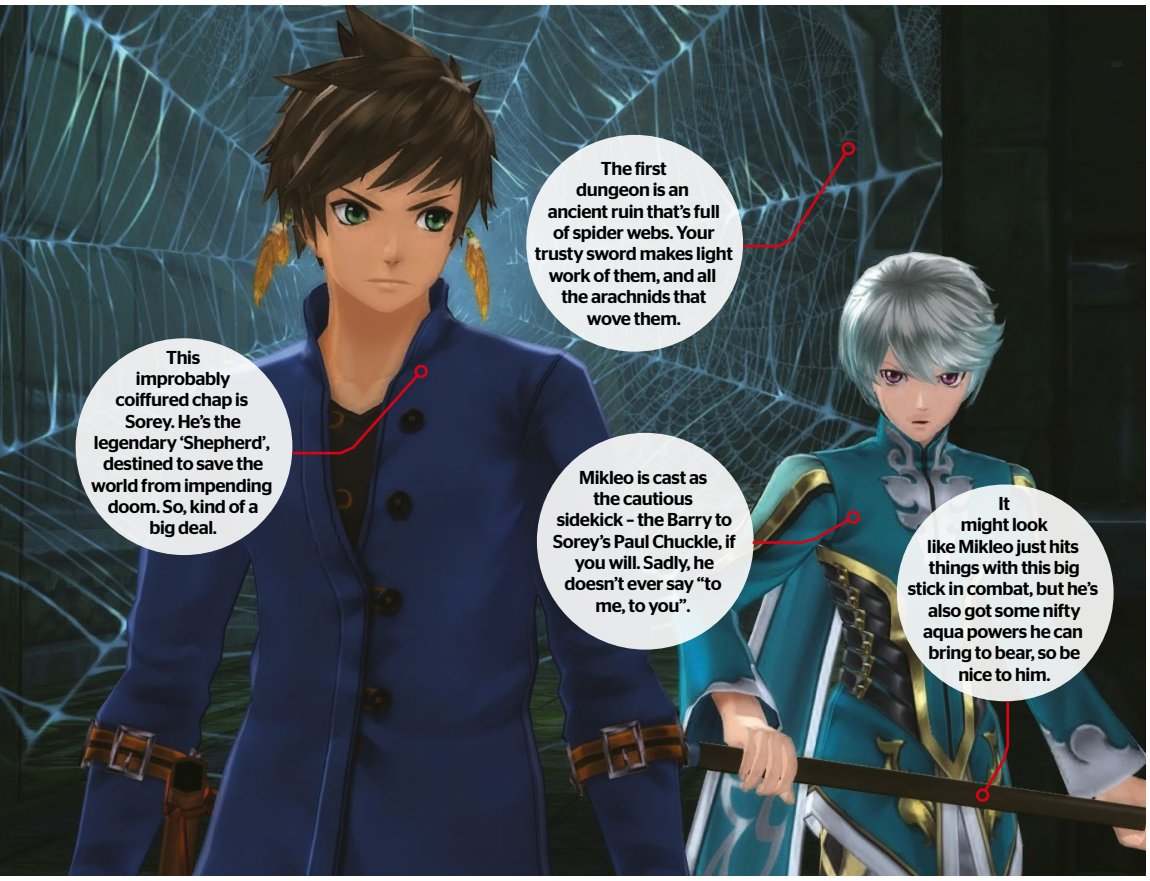
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Format PS4 (reviewed), PC, PS3 **Publisher** Bandai Namco **Developer** Bandai Namco **ETA** Out now **Players** 1

TALES OF ZESTIRIA

Heroes. Legends. Ancient Evil. Silly Hair. Clichès

The titular tales, found within this – the latest entry in the long running 'Tales Of...' series – are ones you likely already know. A heavenly race of long-forgotten deities living in the sky, a princess beleaguered by a power-hungry chancellor, a dark force looming over a medieval kingdom, and a young boy leaving home to take up his position as a long-heralded hero ready to cleanse the land of evil.

Narratives such as these have permeated JRPGs since the genre began, and although a bit of variety wouldn't go amiss, there's a good reason for their staying power: they remain compelling stories. Where Zesteria stands apart is in its presentation. Despite being a PS3 game in Japan, it's quite the looker, though more in its artistic choices than its graphical fidelity. All the touchstones you'd expect – pointy-haired heroes, sweeping vistas, bustling castle towns, and a variety of fantastical monsters – are rendered with colourful, cartoonish flair, and the cutscenes are stunning anime-style masterpieces. The introductory cinematic in particular is something to behold, combining a roaring instrumental-rock theme with some beautifully-animated action. It's intensely melodramatic – they all are, in fact – but there's an undeniable charm to its ridiculous bombast.

Archetype face

When you're in control, gameplay is split between exploration and combat. The former can be a little frustrating, simply due to the scale of the environments. Its equivalent of Hyrule Field is arguably just as pretty, but it's crying out for an Epona-alike to let you trot through it at pace. It's also a little by-the-books, often amounting to little more than 'go here to trigger the next cutscene', but solid characterisation and thoughtful plotting help hide any potential tedium.

And the combat is anything but dull. In the opening hours, we worried that the real-time battles erred too close to button-mashing territory, but steadily more and more techniques and powers were introduced as we went. This gentle learning curve is essential, as once things get going in earnest each fight becomes a frantic flurry of specials, dodges, and gauges – it'll take you some time to master the systems at play. Core to it all is the Armitization system, which allows hero Sorey – and later heroine, Rosè – to fuse with other characters to gain elemental powers. For example, Sorey's BFF, Mikleo, gives you access to a huge, watery bow, and a range of other aquatic attacks.

It's a fresh take on the battle system the series has been refining for 20 years, though it's not flawless: combat takes place within the world rather than on a separate battle screen, and this sometimes causes problems for the otherwise stable camera, especially when enemies back you into a corner. It's an occasional frustration, though far from game-ruining.

At this point, you likely already know whether this is the game for you or not. If overenthusiastic anime heroes or predictable plots have turned you off JRPGs previously, then this is unlikely to change your mind. If they're something you enjoy, or can at least go along with for the sake of some excellent adventuring, then you'll find this a truly epic addition to the genre. ■

"IT'S QUITE THE LOOKER – THOUGH MORE IN ITS ARTISTIC CHOICES THAN ITS GRAPHICAL FIDELITY"

Did Alex ever button-mash his way through the lengthy dialogue sections? Um, no, of course not...

GM LOVES...

- The stunning anime cutscenes bring the story to life.
- Combat, while hectic, is smartly refined over past entries.

GM HATES...

- It's packed full of every JRPG cliché you can think of.
- Dialogue sections drag on. We get it, the world's doomed. Jeez.

Better than...



Kingdom Hearts
Zestiria's story is a bit all over the place at times, but it's nothing compared to the flip-flopping nonsense plot of this Disney-meets-JRPG mash-up.

Worse than...



Chrono Trigger
A true king of JRPGs, as far as we're concerned. Zestiria doesn't do anything as revolutionary as this amazing time-hopping adventure.

NEED TO KNOW



One of our favourite features is the opportunity to customise the appearance of your characters with accessories. We plonked cowboy hats onto our entire party, because why not?

GM JUDGEMENT

86%



The archetypal JRPG – you probably already know if you'll love it – but there's no denying its quality.
Alex Jones



At least in space, Tony can't hear us scream that Pro Skater 5 is the worst thing since sliced plague.

Format PS4, XO (reviewed), PS3, 360 **Publisher** Activision **Developer** Robomodo **ETA** Out now **Players** 1-20

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 5

What have you done, Tony? What have you done?

Tony, we need to talk. We've always liked you – you're one of our oldest friends in gaming. Sure, we were concerned at first when you dedicated your life to nailing wheels on planks and hurling yourself down ramps on them, but it turned out you knew exactly what you were doing. Pro Skaters 1-4 were some of the finest games of their generations, power fantasies that let even the most wobbly-legged among us pull off incredible skateboarding tricks, all with controls that were as easy to learn as they were satisfying to master. So, when this new entry was announced, we wanted to support you, Tony. Truly we did.

But this new Robomodo gang you've been skating with? We don't like them. We don't find them 'radical' in the slightest. This crew was responsible for the missed opportunity that was Pro Skater HD, and the dreadful, broken-peripheral-using Ride and Shred. Somehow, amazingly, PS5 is even worse.

Don't adjust this magazine, the graphics really are that poor. Charmless, lacking in detail, and with cel-shading inferior to Cel Damage on PS2. Yet it still runs horribly, with long load times, constant pop-in, frequent glitches, and mission markers that... don't let you start missions. Were you too embarrassed, Tony, to make them actually playable, in case we saw how boring and repetitive they are?

We at least thought you'd left the core skating well alone. Grinds, manuals, reverts – ignoring every innovation made since Pro Skater 4 seemed lazy, but we could've understood a back-to-basics approach. But then we pressed the grind button when we were in the air, and made Tony 'slam', a move that causes the Birdman to sink through the sky like a stone. We tried to look past this clumsy, unhelpful, *physically impossible* move, but no amount of blissful ignorance would let us ignore the power-up that let us *double jump*. What monster thought people wanted gimmicks like these? The Pro Skater games used to fundamentally be tests of skill. This only tested our faith in the concept of fun.

"CHARMLESS, LACKING IN DETAIL, AND WITH CEL-SHADING INFERIOR TO CEL DAMAGE ON PS2"

Gnarly no more

We used to play together, Tony, in classic offline multiplayer modes such as Horse and King Of The Hill. PS5 has no local multiplayer, instead forcing you to endure its single-player campaign in online skate parks. Now you can watch other skaters hate this, too. Is that why the frame rate is so dismal, Tony? Maybe we were just blinking back tears.

As well as making the game run horribly, being always online brings even mission selection to a grinding halt. Whenever you try one, you have to wait for your skate park lobby to reload without the online skaters. Finish the mission and it achingly reloads the park with the online skaters again. If that last paragraph has you scratching your head, just imagine playing the darn thing. Being polite about it: it's slow and unintuitive.

We always liked you, Tony, even when your recent games bailed. But now you've taken the good Pro Skater name – previously, one of the most respected in gaming – and dragged it through the mud with this broken mess of a skating sim, all for just £49.99. Tony, do our friendship one last favour – never speak to us again. ■

How are Tom's beloved memories of older Tony Hawk games after playing Pro Skater 5? All he sees is wheels and burning.

GM LOVES...

- Nailing a combo reminds us of better Pro Skater games.
- King's Quest unlockables remind us good games exist.

GM HATES...

- Glitchier and clunkier than your average Early Access game.
- The death of one of gaming's purest control schemes.

Better than...



Tony Hawk: Ride
Pro Skater 5 is arguably worse, but hey, we're feeling generous. At least you don't have to wobble around on a stupid fake skateboard.

Worse than...



Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3
Perfect controls, buckets of charm, and still playable today. Pro Skater 5 doesn't deserve to share the same series name as this gem.

2ND OPINION



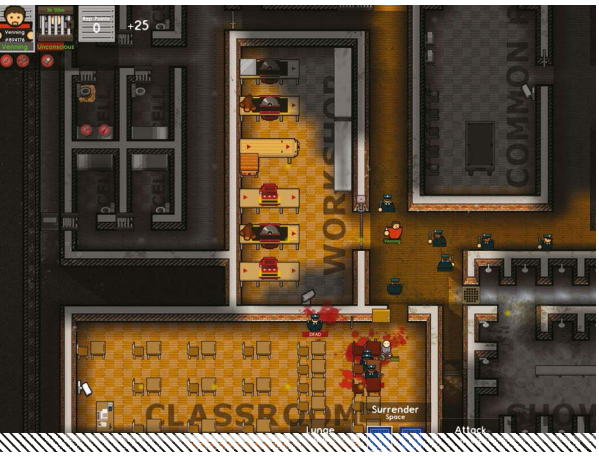
"This is truly the inescapable black hole of Tony Hawk's Pro Skater, sucking in everything you once loved about the classic titles and distorting it all into a blurry mess. Playing it is like watching the series die before your very eyes. In other words: it's proper bum vomit."
Ben Tyrer, Staff Writer, OPM

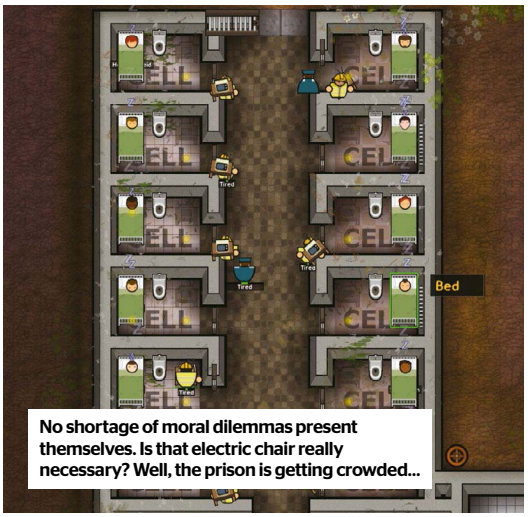
GM JUDGEMENT

32%



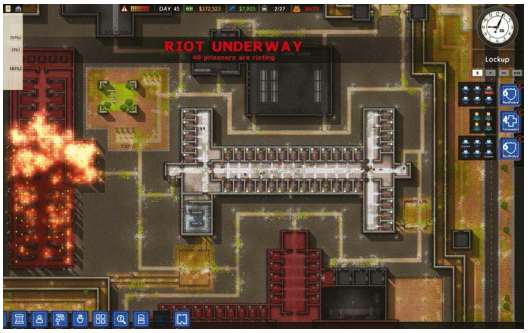
A disgrace. When double jumps aren't the worst part, something's gone terribly wrong.
Tom Stone





No shortage of moral dilemmas present themselves. Is that electric chair really necessary? Well, the prison is getting crowded...





Format PC **Publisher** Introversion **Developer** Introversion **ETA** Out now **Players** 1

PRISON ARCHITECT

So long, and shanks for the memories

The prisoners are miserable, the canteen isn't providing enough food, and the last time we sent in builders to extend the size, things just got *really* ugly. In fact, some of the corpses are still there. Maybe it'll help to watch the budget plummet and put a TV in each room... What do you mean they can't eat Jeremy Kyle and adverts for sustenance? Ungrateful sods.

After 36 months inside Early Access, Prison Architect is out on parole and, like one of the super prisons we now aspire to build, it's almost overwhelmingly packed. Life behind bars is somehow simple yet painfully complex. Your deceptively innocent-looking cartoon prisoners – who are depicted far more disturbingly in gory comic story sections – just need the basics. A place to sleep, food, showers, clothes and... oh god, where did you find that shiv? That guard had a *family* you know.

Thankfully, a campaign mode awaits to teach you the basics of prison life – adding an extra capacitor to the power supply and turning it off and on again to fully install an electric chair is a painfully grim highlight – but this isn't a walk in the park. Want to power your cell block? Wait for workmen to build the electric lines. Want beds in each room? Someone's going to have to bring them in. Patience might be a virtue, but when you've got a crew of prisoners all crammed into one holding cell who have probably all joined at least one gang by now, you're in serious trouble. Add in a tight budget and the fact that items can't just be picked up and repositioned and planning is key.

Bar none

Managing to go through a day of prison life without serious incident is a wonderful achievement. Watching guards patrol the routes you've set them, prisoners trooping in for meals at your specified lunch times, and the laundry churning out clean clothing for everyone is an institutionalised joy. A danger level in the top bar plummets satisfyingly... until suddenly it starts to increase and you can't quite pinpoint why. Oh, someone's smuggling in heroin. Again.

That's where the impressive depth really takes over. You can surface skim. Watch from a distance, as you bring in prisoners and maybe give them a cell window. Or hire some snitches so you can use the Intelligence tab, and watch in horror as contraband or escape attempts across the prison are revealed. Suddenly you want to triple the guards and perform nightly shakedowns of the whole place – but what will that do to prison morale?

Yet for all its depth, it can sometimes feel inaccessible. Just like prison itself, there's no hand-holding here, and it's worth noting that we've experienced our fair share of bugs. While some are just things like workmen not building, one game-breaker sent us back to the start of the campaign when a progression icon failed to appear. But despite the stress of learning the ropes – and the near necessity of the Wiki on a second screen – there's something dangerously addictive here. You can even perfect the system and then turn things around with Escape mode, where you can attempt to get out of your own prison. It's a behemoth of a simulation, but put in the time and you'll never want to escape. ■

"WATCH IN HORROR AS CONTRABAND OR ESCAPE ATTEMPTS ACROSS THE PRISON ARE REVEALED"

Which prison pun did Louise get really sad about not including? Shiv and let die.

GM LOVES...

- The sheer depth of simulation on offer is incredible.
- Remarkable freedom in how you want to run your prison.

GM HATES...

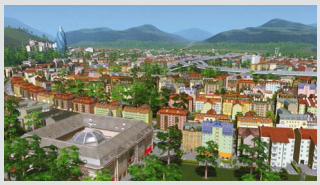
- It turns out being a warden is really daunting and difficult.
- Unfortunate bugs are crawling around despite the full release.

Better than...



The Escapists
It's a close one, but Prison Architect manages to casually throw in the chance to escape from a prison of your very own design. Very cool.

Worse than...



Cities Skylines
If you're looking for the ultimate building sandbox and management sim, there's none bigger or better than this colossal city-building sim.

NEED TO KNOW



Prison Architect has already sold a staggering 1.25 million copies since its 2012 Early Access launch. It's been through an incredible 36 alpha builds before reaching this final release version.

GM JUDGEMENT

78%



A world of grim opportunity – but you need to suffer before earning the glory of your own Alcatraz.
Louise Blain



Format PS4 **Publisher** Omega Force **Developer** Square Enix **ETA** Out now **Players** 1

DRAGON QUEST HEROES

A goo-tiful game? Yes, but not the slime of our lives

Delightful is not a word you would normally apply to the works of Japanese studio Omega Force. More often that not it concerns itself with churning out middling anime tie-ins, or unchanging, history-aping melee brawlers with a death wish for your DualShock 4's Square button. But, yes, this is, if not the most deep and involving of the franchise's many entries, disarmingly charming.

Partly that's down to the vivid, colourful world and characters. Playing as one of two heroes entirely new to the Dragon Quest stable, you explore a series of typically JRPG-flavoured towns and cities (you know the type: the desert city, the forest city, the medieval city et al) in a bid to bash monsters and discover why these once friendly beasties have suddenly gone all Walter-White-as-reimagined-by-Disney.

En route you're joined by a growing cast of party members, each a nod to DQs past. There's Alena and Kiryl from DQIII, complete with comical Russian accents and amiably bumbling unrequited love schtick. There's lone swordsman and Link cosplay connoisseur Terry, from DQVI, packing the personalty of a plank of wood nailed to a resentful piece of Ikea furniture. Then there's our favourite pair, Jessica and Yangus, the sass-filled mage and self-styled bandit-turned-'ero from DQVIII, complete with embarrassingly low-cut top and Ray Winstone-esque Cockney timbre. They're as loveably voiced and irate with each other as ever.

Goo-d vibrations

All these folk adhere to tropes as reliably as a clockwork surgeon, but with some great English voice acting (good enough to have us flicking back from the usually preferable Japanese audio option), and an almost Pixar-ish quality of design, it's easy to feel a hardened exterior of criticism slip away and simply enjoy being in their company.

As for the meat and potatoes of combat, there are hints that DQH will take you beyond the Dynasty Warriors team's usual fare here, too. Monsters can be captured and placed amid the encroaching enemy hordes to hold the line while you deal with foes elsewhere on the battlefield. Zoom spells let you teleport, essentially eliminating the awkward between-fight bits where you're left trotting vast distances with nought but pottery to swing at.

But ultimately the depth offered by these elements, and RPG trappings encountered in shops and via quest givers, only goes skin deep. Weapons you buy never offer up legitimate changes in playstyle; rather they simply see a single damage stat increase. There's some tweakery to be done when choosing exactly which skills and passive abilities your team of controllable funsters get to utilise, but without the meaty, tangible character progression we're used to, one melancholy thought surfaces constantly: that it's been a long time since the last major Dragon Quest hit our shores, and we're well overdue.

Bubbly and filled with that aforementioned charm, there's still enough here to warrant a starved JRPG fan's attention – especially if said fan brings a familiarity with the Dragon Quest series as a whole to the party. But it'll likely leave all but the most ardent of Square fans wanting. ■

"TERRY PACKS THE PERSONALITY OF A PLANK OF WOOD NAILED TO A RESENTFUL PIECE OF FURNITURE"

Matt's favourite background music while playing? M-ooze's album: Absol-ooze-tion.

GM LOVES...

- The characters are fun, funny, and wonderfully acted.
- It looks fantastic, and the sound design hits all the right buttons.

GM HATES...

- RPG elements hint at a depth of customisation which isn't there.
- Bland combat has us pining for the series' Japan-only entries.

Better than...



Dynasty Warriors 8
There's plenty more depth here than in Omega's slash-a-thon – but then, it'd have been hard pressed to have less than that button-masher.

Worse than...



Dragon Quest IX
Six years ago. Six?! That we even remember that theme tune is testament to the enduring brilliance of the series. Where's X at, Square?

NEED TO KNOW



Akira Toriyama is the chap responsible for the character designs of DQ, and he's something of a celebrity in Japan. Dragonball, Chrono Trigger, and Blue Dragon are his other famous works.

GM JUDGEMENT

68%



Charming, and with more to it than most Warriors, but not the Quest in show.
Matt Sakuraoka-Gilman



You can choose between a total of six pre-set Jesses, clad in either dungarees or suspenders. Decisions, decisions.







Format PS4 (reviewed), XO, Wii U, PC, PS3, 360, PS Vita, Mobile **Pub** Telltale Games **Dev** Telltale Games **ETA** Now **Players** 1

MINECRAFT: STORY MODE – EPISODE ONE

A chip off the old block

We've all been there. You're tootling on down to a Minecraft convention with a bunch of pals, when suddenly your pet pig's dragon costume catches on fire. As he hoofs it away into the horizon (leaving the delicious yet tragic aroma of frying bacon in his wake), you're forced to spend the rest of the day tracking him down – a search that brings you to a shady man in an alley where... well, that's where we'd start getting into serious spoiler territory for The Order Of The Stone, episode one of this bold franchise spin-off.

Telltale has been telling tales again. Indeed, the last few years have seen the point-and-click episodic specialist dishing out narrative games faster and harder than an ex-con doing community service in a high-school canteen. This latest release, however, is a bold departure for the studio. In contrast to previous titles such as The Walking Dead and Tales From The Borderlands, Minecraft: Story Mode marks the first time the studio has created a narrative for an IP that... well, doesn't have one to start with.

Luckily for the studio, what the franchise does have is a rich wellspring of creatures, locations, and ideas just begging to be, ahem, mined. Fans of the original game will be delighted by trips through the Nether, in-jokes about Creepers, and the ability to craft items and build structures (albeit in a much more limited way), and even those who aren't into Minecraft can enjoy the witty dialogue, the gorgeous graphics, and the hilarious facial expressions of your trusty sidekick pig, Reuben. The story is fleshed out with characters that are genuinely strong and complicated in their own right, while also embodying player archetypes: the warrior, the architect, the griefer, and the engineer.

Top build

Stellar voice acting is the cement that binds the whole thing together. It's a more star-studded cast than the studio's ever managed before, with Patton Oswalt, Brian Posehn, John Hodgman, and Paul Reubens all taking roles. Particularly well performed are the two possible voices for main character Jesse. This is the first Telltale game in which you can choose your gender, a nifty touch that adds to the replayability, as the divergent deliveries actually create very different portraits of the character.

Visually, it's a real delight to behold. Characters made of blocks could easily have clunked around the screen like inebriated Lego models – instead, the graphics are so slick you could slip on them, while at the same time perfectly evoking Minecraft's iconic aesthetic.

Still, the niggle with the game is the same thorn in the side of every Telltale title – your decisions never really feel like they matter, and in a game sold on its freedom of choice, it's hard for that not to be a downer. The story is great, and yes, the characters are compelling, but ultimately, no matter what you do over the course of the game, the narrative will essentially end the same way.

The journey that takes you there, however, is a surprisingly joyous ride, and while the end of this debut episode might feel a little too slow and inevitable, its arrival will still pump you full of adrenaline and have you running full pelt towards the next chapter. ■

"STELLAR VOICE ACTING IS THE CEMENT THAT BINDS THE WHOLE THING TOGETHER"

Why did Telltale decide to make a Minecraft game? It thought it would be ore-some. (For the real answer, see p14!)

GM LOVES...

- Everything about Reuben the pig. Reuben rocks.
- Reuben the pig's dragon costume. That also rocks.

GM HATES...

- When Reuben the pig's dragon costume catches fire.
- That the game is not called Minecraft: Reuben The Pig.

Better than...



Telltale's Game Of Thrones
With much less sighing, huffing and general misery, Story Mode presents far more likeable characters.

Worse than...



Telltale's The Walking Dead
Let's face it, gore-flecked The Walking Dead zombies are *much* scarier than fluorescent green grumbly ones.

2ND OPINION



"Like a defective Creeper, it goes off with a fizzle rather than a bang. Puzzles are mind-numbingly simple, combat is sloppy, and the writing is hit-or-miss. That QTE training montage, though? Genius. Nothing says Minecraft like a good ol' fashioned tree-walloping scene."
Jen Simpkins, Staff Writer, OPM

GM JUDGEMENT

85%



An adventure for all ages, and another solid hit from Telltale – just don't expect Minecraft's freedom.
Alysia Judge

GM Review

The Final Verdict!

NOW PLAYING

This month's biggest time sinks on Team GM



1 DESTINY: THE TAKEN KING
PS4
The Sleeper Simulant mightn't be all it was cracked up to be, but I'm loving my Jade Rabbit scout rifle. Wish Prison Of Elders was still relevant, though...
Matt Sakuraoka-Gilman, Editor

2 SOMA
PS4
I love a bit of existential ponderment. Throw in sentient AIs, a chilling undersea locale, and more twists than a fusilli maker riding the dodgems, and I'm chuffed.
Matt Sakuraoka-Gilman, Editor



3 FORZA 6
XO
The best-looking driving game out there, and the multiplayer especially is great fun. Bundle that up with a huge choice of cars and tracks, and you have an incredibly addictive racer.
Sam Freeman, Art Editor

4 DARK SOULS
PC
Ok, so maybe The Bed Of Chaos gave me a little trouble, but Seath was a pushover. Only one Lord Soul left to get. I'm coming for you, Nito!
Robin Valentine, Production Editor



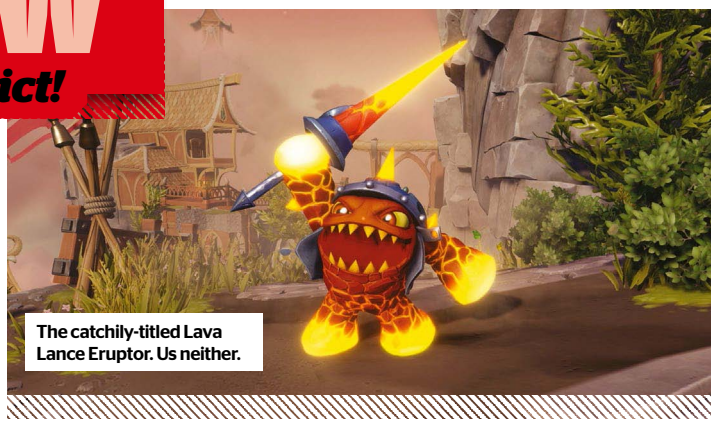
5 SOMA
PC
Brilliantly atmospheric and genuinely thought-provoking – this is sci-fi horror at its best, and a confident step forward from Amnesia developer Frictional Games.
Robin Valentine, Production Editor

6 FIFA 16
XO
It hasn't evolved dramatically, but the player realism, slicker ball control, and updated career mode make for an exciting overall upgrade.
Sam Freeman, Art Editor



OFFICE LUNCHTIME GAME OF THE MONTH:

LARA CROFT AND THE TEMPLE OF OSIRIS
PS4
This month, we learned the meaning of teamwork. Then found it's more fun to drop each other in spike pits.



The catchily-titled Lava Lance Eruptor. Us neither.





Format PS4 (reviewed), XO, PS3, 360, Wii U, Wii, 3DS, iOS **Publisher** Activision
Developer Vicarious Visions **ETA** Out now **Players** 1-4

SKYLANDERS SUPERCHARGERS

A bargain toys-to-life game? Go figure...

One year on from the debacle of Trap Team (bloated pricing model, general lack of new gameplay), Skylanders has a *lot* of ground to make up. So that new name is apt, considering the nitrous-oxide powered U-turn Vicarious Visions has miraculously pulled off.

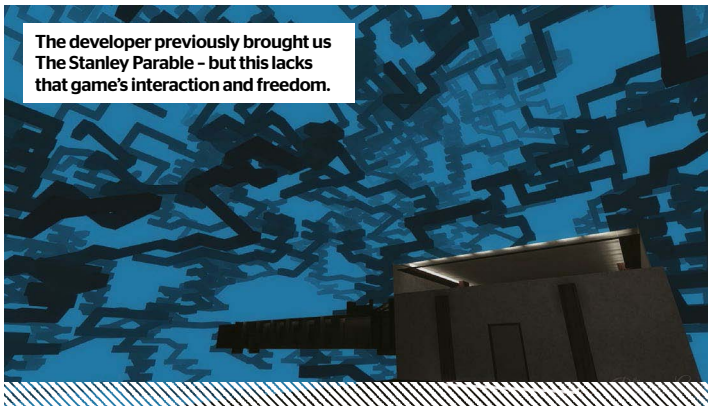
Superchargers' motorised gimmick seems fairly tame – but when mixed with its new approach to unlocking content, it becomes just what the series needs. The 20 vehicles are split into three categories (land, sea, and sky), with every mission chapter containing a task related to each. Only the land-based car missions are mandatory, however, so even if you just play the eight-hour-long campaign with a single motor and 'Lander, you still experience most of what's on offer.

It's a revelatory approach, designed specifically to provide bang for your buck. Those vehicles sections, along with track-based car bits and aerial dogfights, are brilliant – and nicely break up the Diet Diablo core gameplay. Also palatable are the near non-existence of Elemental Gates, the ability to use any portal from the previous instalments, and a rad driving component that supports offline and online races. It's no Mario Kart 8, but nonetheless robust and rewarding.

Some flaws do remain. Combat lacks depth, and the focus on platforming feels a touch impotent without a proper double-jump, but with such a mountain of content (including many ultra-creative puzzles introduced in the latter half of the game's 50+ chapters) even losing the long-standing Arena mode can't upset this return to form. ■

Dom Reseigh-Lincoln

84%



The developer previously brought us The Stanley Parable – but this lacks that game's interaction and freedom.





Format PC **Publisher** Everything Unlimited Ltd **Developer** Everything Unlimited Ltd
ETA Out now **Players** 1

THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE

More story than game

Exploratory narrative games split opinion. They *can* be powerful experiences – you're just advancing a plot, yet feel involved via routes taken, decisions made or interpretations perceived. Your mechanical input and conceptual output is part of the substance of the story.

This walking simulator – yes, really – fails to do that well, leaving a game with interesting themes, but stodgy mechanics and a muddled journey. The core idea is that you're being shown a collection of games created by a man known as Coda. These deal quite heavy-handedly with inadequacy, isolation, and creative struggles. The narrator talks about his interpretations as you play, 'using' tools to unlock areas and bypass unsolvable puzzles.

Revelations are great 'oooh' moments as you consider their meanings, but the last 40 minutes drag. The games are meant to be simple as an artistic expression, but the reality is interactions rarely serve any purpose greater than to let the narrator continue, leaving you wondering who this is really for – him or you? That voice is game director and Stanley Parable creator Davey Wreden, who's been vocal about the burden of his previous success. As a result this plays a little like a therapy session, with you as a captive audience. It's a smart idea with fascinating concepts, executed in a way that never lets them breathe. ■

Leon Hurley

63%



It looks serene now, but just wait until the shells start flying.





Format PC **Publisher** Wargaming **Developer** Wargaming **ETA** Out now **Players** 8-24

WORLD OF WARSHIPS

A spot of naval gazing

Think of a 24-way multiplayer match-up and your mind probably swims with visions of frenetic shotgun duels and brutal melee beatdowns. In Wargaming's latest, however, you're exchanging shells from ten kilometres away and waiting five full seconds to see them connect. The closest thing to a melee beatdown is a risky ram to a destroyer's starboard side.

World Of Warships is a distinctive beast, then, offering a sense of scale and pace all its own. Indeed, at times it's almost painfully sedate. Hop into a 12-on-12 match and you spend several minutes maneuvering your ship into position, taking careful account of the atolls and archipelagos that scatter each of the oceanic maps, in an effort to get the drop on unwary enemy captains. You also have ample time to admire the ocean swell and rosy sunsets before the shells start flying.

Once they do, ship-to-ship combat proves tense and strategic in all the right ways. Battleships and cruisers need to carefully position themselves to maximise the damage dealt by their slow-moving main armaments, while destroyers zip through the carnage loosing devastating torpedo strikes against their sluggish adversaries. Gigantic aircraft carriers, meanwhile, direct aerial attack squadrons in bombing runs on enemy vessels.

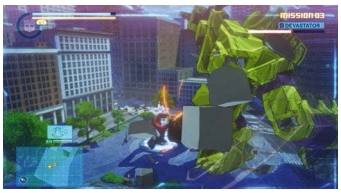
Unfortunately, the game's parsimonious free-to-play model makes unlocking these ships feel like more of a chore than it should – but in spite of the grind, World Of Warships remains a unique and satisfying bit of seafaring, with enough depth to rival the Atlantic.

84%

■ ***James Nouch***



The '80s TV show, in HD? Oh, go on then.





Format PS4 (reviewed), XO, PC, PS3, 360 **Publisher** Activision
Developer Platinum Games **ETA** Out now **Players** 1

TRANSFORMERS: DEVASTATION

A Prime cut of Platinum action

What a transformation for Platinum Games' tie-in work. Last year's The Legend Of Korra was the action-house's first true whiff, its repetitive fisticuffs missing out on the richness of the source material. By contrast, this is a brief confection of fan-pleasing G1 authenticity and fender-smashing action to delight all but the most ironclad of hearts.

Chunky designs and vocal talents from the '84 cartoon aren't the only things Platinum restores: a lot is on loan from Bayonetta. This is a game built around its dodge – wait for the tell, hold your nerve, and dive out of danger just in time, activating a slo-mo window for reprisal.

To this formula Devastation welds five playable Autobots with distinct moves and alternate forms. The latter are used for getting around, but also to get a run up for shield-smashing power strikes.

This is more than My First Bayonetta – enemies hit sufficiently hard even in normal difficulty to steamroller those with poor timing. The reward is pure flow when you're nailing the cues, plus new moves to help you vary tactics. What's in-between isn't as inspired: the level design and platforming sections exist merely to ferry you into fights with more 'cons than the Makuhari Messe sees in a year. Even so, it's a delirious Saturday-morning romp through the Decepticon forces. Welcome back, Plat.

82%

■ ***Matt Clapham***

HOT DOWNLOADS

The latest DLC and expansions explored



As if anyone needed any further incentive to pop back to Yharnam, From Software is launching its Bloodborne expansion The Old Hunters this month, promising new areas, enemies, and bloody great weapons for its arterial action adventure. As well as the sweet lure of fresh gear, it also promises to flesh out some of the more enigmatic elements of Bloodborne's lore, and to this end From has already revealed a gruesome boss battle with Ludwig, first hunter of the Healing Church. If that's set your pulse racing, then The Old Hunters will be available to purchase on 24 November.



But if all that seems a bit gothic and gore-spattered for your tastes, Bethesda's Orsinium expansion for The Elder Scrolls Online: Tamriel Unlimited will offer a slightly more wholesome brand of fun when it launches on 17 November. Taking place in the once-mighty orc capital, it's ESO's largest DLC to date, offering some 20 hours of additional adventuring alongside new public dungeons and world bosses. What's more, it's free to anyone with an active ESO Plus membership. Non-Plus paupers will have to shell out 3,000 crowns (£13.49) to earn a place within Orsinium's walls.



The first of Forza 6's monthly DLC releases, meanwhile, is determined to make you feel like an opulent so-and-so, offering the chance to drive an assortment of six souped-up racers and one honest-to-goodness limo. While we can't personally attest to the racing credentials of the 2013 Cadillac XTS Limousine, it's sure to offer a smooth ride at least, and petrol-heads can coo over the inclusion of the Caparo T1 and the Honda RA300. It's all available now for £5.59 – chauffeur's outfit sold separately.



And while we're on the subject of automobiles, it's worth noting that Psyonix has launched a rather less realistic selection of motors in its latest Rocket League DLC Revenge Of The Battle Cars, which includes two new vehicles – Scarab and Zippy – alongside a selection of 12 decals, four car toppers, and a trio of fresh paintjobs for your preferred racer. None of this will help you score any goals of course, but at least now we can lose in style.



5 REASONS to REPLAY

1. Factor 5 really knew its stuff: Rogue Squadron looked and sounded like a truly next-gen videogame, especially if you had the rich kids' 4MB Expansion Pak.

2. Provided you stuck to the job at hand, having the gameplay taken off set rails meant that your flight path through each mission was your own.

3. Even though your wingmen sometimes appeared to be drunk and/or dunces, having radio chatter (especially on a cartridge) helped seal the atmosphere.

4. All missions took place near the surface rather than out in space. That meant getting to see places from Kessel to Mon Calamari up close. No cheeky tourist afternoons off though.

5. Gold medals were serious business, but the bonus ships and stages were worth the effort. Death Star? Yes! Hoth? Yes! A Jar Jar escort mission? No.



This is from the PC version, which ditches the N64's endearing fog and fuzz, so you can actually tell an X-Wing from a Vauxhall Zafira.

Legend of Gaming • Legend #34 of Gaming

STAR WARS: ROGUE SQUADRON

All this on one cartridge – Yavin a laugh?

Along with Virtua (not Virtual) Fighter and DKC2: Diddy's Kong Quest (not Diddy Kong's Quest), Rogue (not Rouge) Squadron will go down as one of the most consistently misspelled games of all time. But that's alright. Even visions of square-jawed pilots applying make-up in a sequinned mirror couldn't undermine one of the most gratifying Star Wars games your outlandish space-dollars could buy.

Developer Factor 5
Publisher LucasArts
Released 1998
Format N64, PC
Get it GOG.com

The origins

German developer Factor 5, presumably giving up on the sunscreen business, had already built bridges with LucasArts by the time The Phantom Menace prerelease hype started to build (well, we were all young and naïve once). From its new HQ closer to LucasArts in California, the team began gently prodding the Death Star proprietor for full access to its toybox.

N64 launch title Star Wars: Shadows Of The Empire inspired Factor 5's pitch – or at least the impressive opening flight level of that hot mess of gameplay styles in a box. Handed Luke Skywalker himself to play with, Factor 5 roped in side character Wedge Antilles, landgrabbed the period between A New Hope's Battle of Yavin and the start of The Empire Strikes Back, and set about relaying the story of the pair and their jobbing band of airborne Empire-botherers.

It wasn't an easy ride: learning the ways of the N64 and unshackled 3D gameplay caused no end of trouble until the last few months of the game's development – not that you'd ever suspect any of this when you come to actually jumping in and playing it.

The legend

The heavily cockpit-centric action followed in the wake of the classic X-Wing series on PC, but there was no intricate pitch and yaw calculation to put you off your shootin' in Factor 5's "accessible free-flight action game". Rogue Squadron was glorious, streamlined arcade exhilaration all the way.

You did of course get to fly an X-wing... along with a sprightly A-wing, a weighty Y-wing, a newbie V-wing, and a snowspeeder for those tow-cable moments, plus bonus ships such as the Millennium Falcon, a TIE fighter, and, er, a 1969 Buick Electra, for anyone who was a bad enough dude to amass a whole cargo hold full of medals.

With objectives ranging from bombing runs to rescue missions, each stage formed its own intoxicating little Rebel Alliance adventure in a bubble. Familiar names, moments, text scrolls and audio stings strutted by; by the halfway point of the first mission, you were spearing through formations of TIE bombers in the

"RELAYING THE STORY OF LUKE, WEDGE, AND THEIR JOBBING BAND OF AIRBONE EMPIRE-BOTHERERS"



Unlock this baby and Falcon punch a path through those Imperial a-holes!





They made a prototype S-Wing, but kids just kept playing on it.

parched skies over Mos Eisley, and by the time you hit the bonus missions you were wrapped up toasty-tight in the bantha furs of fanboy heaven.

The legacy

Not only was Rogue Squadron gleefully received as a highlight of the N64 library and the wider Star Wars gaming club, but the GameCube brought us equally lovely second and third instalments in Rogue Leader and Rebel Strike.

Sadly it was the last great accomplishment for Factor 5, as plans for more games (and a juicy next-gen trilogy compilation) fell burning from the sky, one after the next. Sony was less interested in Star Wars fun times, so while a PS3 hookup did offer a shot at new IP, in the end it couldn't stave off a quiet and dignified closure.

But the name of Rogue Squadron lives on, setting the standard that DICE and others now need to match when they let us scruffy oiks into the cockpit of a factory-fresh Y-wing or Han Solo's old hunk of junk. We're red-faced with anticipation for our next breathless Star Wars adventure – and it's not just because of all the rouge. ■

Studio Spotlight

Press F5 to refresh



1 Katakis

(Amiga, C64 – 1988)

Factor 5's debut in a role that fast became familiar, upgrading C64 games to Amiga in style. Rainbow Arts' infamous R-Type tribute act Katakis (later recalled, tweaked to soothe lawyers, and relaunched as Denaris) was a fine beginning. The 'punishment' from lawyer-wielding Activision? Insisting Factor 5 did the official R-Type conversion too. See, kids, stealing does pay!



2 Mega Turrican

(Mega Drive, Amiga – 1993)

Metroid/Contra mixtape Turrican became Factor 5's baby as the studio moved on from buffing up Manfred Trenz' C64 originals to creating new console outings from scratch. This boss-infested Mega Drive bad lad (the SNES got its own Super Turrican) also landed on Amiga as Turrican III, while mooted spiritual successor Thornado became a famous 'lost project' of the N64 era.



3 Indiana Jones' Greatest Adventures

(SNES – 1994)

Factor 5's first but not final fling with the old whip-cracker (an N64 port of Indy and the Infernal Machine followed in 2000). This one did what it said on the tin: scenes from all three films as 28 levels of solid platforming, in the rosy times before that fourth film, Indiana Jones And The Nightmare Of LaBeouf.



4 Ballblazer Champions

(PS1 – 1997)

F5 was forever ricocheting from one system to the next, but this remake of LucasFilm's 8-bit future sport trailblazer was its only original PS1 project. Not a bad one, just not daring enough to make waves: new arenas, new weapons, the rest left much as it was. Its real value as a 3D training tool become clear when Rogue Squadron rocketed off the launchpad a year later.



5 Lair

(PS3 – 2007)

Oh, Lair. When the studio signed up to PS3 in 2005, it didn't stray too far from its comfort zone – it pretty much just swapped out X-wings for dragon riders. Audiovisually, this dark fantasy was majestic as always – but with critics and customers rising up to decry the crippling motion controls and clanking design, there could be no happy ending and no hope of a series. On the bright side, it looked bloody lovely in screenshots.

SIX OF THE BEST...

EVIL EMPIRES

Power corrupts – just look at all the empirical evidence

They tend not to get a very good rap in games, empires. How much of that is down to the legacy of Star Wars, and how much is because 'Evil Emperor' sounds so much more satisfying than 'Nice Emperor', is hard to say. In fairness, certain other genres claim more than their fair share too: it sometimes feels like every JRPG comes with a belligerent or downright demented empire (plus an amnesiac, an airship, and a giraffe-sized sword) since Final Fantasy pushed forward the first of many bonkers tyrants back in the '80s. For this selection we did, however, manage to track down tales of overreaching imperial ambition from right across the board, even after discounting anything with a Sith in it. This issue of GM doesn't need any more help with its midi-chlorian count... ■



FURON EMPIRE

Destroy All Humans! (PS2, Xbox – 2005)

Under Emperor Meningitis (really) the Furons have visited Earth since the '50s to probe, zap, and harvest brain stem DNA. And you could play as one of the top-heavy little sods, merrily doing it all yourself.



PALAMECIAN EMPIRE

Final Fantasy II (NES – 1988)

Mateus was the Emperor this bunch of warmongers deserved: he went to Hell, offed Satan, took over, and brought Castle Pandaemonium thundering up to the surface, shouting "Coo-ee!" (possibly).



VIGOOR EMPIRE

Ninja Gaiden (Xbox – 2004)

A dictatorship in league with fiends and demons? Had a shot at world domination, then they started a beef with a ninja clan – schoolboy error – and Ryu Hayabusa tore the Holy Vigoor Emperor a new one.





VALUAN EMPIRE

Skies Of Arcadia (Dreamcast – 2000)

A military superpower with magic, airships, and a ruling caste so unstable that most of Valua (even the diva Empress Teodora) would end up spectacularly flattened by one of its own Armada commanders.

BYDO EMPIRE

R-Type (Arcade – 1987)

Big bad biological weapons made by mankind in the 26th century that promptly turned into wrong 'uns, seething across time, space and dimensions to wipe us out. They also enjoyed yoga and gardening.

JADE EMPIRE

Jade Empire (Xbox – 2005)

Not everyone here was bad, but the Emperor was an angry ghost ruling through fear, assassination and the devil-bouncer Death's Hand, so that sucked. Unleash the wuxia and kick evil in its spectral bumhole!

Grab Bag

Retro gems from every era



Awesome Boss!



Super Probotector: Alien Rebels

Format SNES **Developer** Konami **Released** 1992

Or Contra III: The Alien Wars to the right-thinking world outside Europe. Is one rapid-firing Terminator enough for a boss fight? No, let's have two. And they keep going as bouncing torsos after you've shot their legs off. Is that enough? No: the *whole back wall* should be torn open by a third giant robot with eye lasers and fiery breath. Is that enough? Yes. That is probably enough.

Classic Moment!



Combat School

Format Amstrad CPC, C64, Spectrum, Arcade
Developer Konami/Ocean **Released** 1987

If you thought Konami's military twist on Track & Field ended at the drill instructor punch-up, think again: a real live field mission followed, sending you to bust hostages out of the US embassy by thrashing terrorists, Kung Fu Master style. Just you, fresh out of boot camp. With no backup. It's, er... nice to be trusted?

Remake Request!



Tetrisphere

Format N64 **Developer** H2O Entertainment **Released** 1997

"Manipulate our gradually swelling balls," as the tagline didn't say. Puzzlers are out of style now, but the N64 had some beauts from Pokemon Puzzle League (don't judge), through Wetrix, to this 3D head-messer-upper. Like most 'improvements' to Tetris, it sounded abysmal on paper; unlike most, it was executed with skill, style, comedy robots, and a shedload of techno.



The team got friends and neighbours to be the zombies – and the horde took down plenty of players on the day.

CURIOSITY KILLED THE CHAT

How exactly do you go about making an interactive FPS for unsuspecting ChatRouletters? We catch up with **Shaz Abdullah** from Realm Pictures to find out



All the weapons were Nerf guns painted by Shaz, enhanced with appropriate sound effects.

Just imagine for a second; you're clicking through webcam-based nattering site ChatRoulette, hoping desperately not to get another eyeful of genitalia, and these four magical words pop up; 'Type 'Start' To Begin.' What do you do? Keep clicking on, or enter the word and see what happens next?

For those brave souls who went for it earlier this year, Realm Pictures had an incredible treat in store. With a health bar, and a Doomguy-style mugshot at the bottom of the screen, a slew of ChatRouletters were instantly in charge of the survival of a man in a church that just happened to be crawling with zombies. Starting off in a room with a corpse and a locked door, they had to tell the character what to do in order to find their way out and reach the end of the level.

"The first incarnation of the idea came about several years ago, when we were messing around on ChatRoulette," explains Shaz Abdullah from the Realm Pictures team. "My housemate Dave (the director) had a webcam attached to his netbook (to really date how long ago this was) and decided to hold it in a 'first person' perspective while someone else behind him held the netbook and talked to the person on the other end and asked 'what should I do?'. Cut to a few years later, and we wondered what it would be like, with the new tech available to make almost a real first person shooter level with guns and enemies to fight," It's moments like this that GoPros were made for,

Chat boom

Incredibly, those watching and controlling the 'game' could see everything in real time. When the leading man picked up a shotgun – with a satisfied whoop from the voice actor – a graphic popped up in the left corner of the screen to let them know what they were armed with. As players inevitably lost health, even the mugshot at the bottom changed, with blood pouring from the hero's nose. As labours of love go, it was an incredible feat.

"The prep took about a month, which mainly consisted of getting the streaming system to work and with as little latency as possible, as well as finding a way to play sounds and lay over the HUD graphics in real time over the GoPro feed," explains Abdullah. "As well as that, I prepped and painted the Nerf guns and built the props and set pieces. The place we shot is actually our house. It's a converted church that we both live in and base our film company out of, so we decided to make the most of it for the aesthetic of the video!"

Neighbours arrived to be mocked up as zombies, and there was a massive team to make sure everything ran smoothly. As players progressed, the leading man constantly asked what to do, from who to shoot to how to solve puzzles. "All of his dialogue was completely ad-libbed," explains Abdullah. "Originally it was intended to just be a bit of a guide for the player and say things such as "I can't open this door, it's locked", but it evolved into more of a banter between him and the player."

"EVEN THE MUGSHOT CHANGED, BLOOD POURING FROM THE HERO'S NOSE"



Thankfully, players could find bottles of painkillers to top up their flagging health bars.



Failure triggered a suitably gory death screen, before the team lined things up for the next willing victim.



The demonic final boss before the end of level portal could only be killed with a rocket launcher, found in a chest hidden in the top of the church. Just a scant few players worked it out and completed the game.





Unlike a game, there were no lives. If players were overcome by zombies and died, that was it. No restarts, and the team went onto a new player. The finale of the level was a giant demonic boss – actually a man in Chaos Space Marine cosplay – to be taken down with some serious weaponry. "Only a handful of people made it to the end," Abdullah enthuses. "The mechanic we had put forth was the only way he could be defeated was with the rocket launcher. So the majority of players just ran in all-guns-blazing and were defeated – there were only two people who made it all the way to the end!"

Nerf herder

And remarkably there was only one slight accident with the GoPro, and not a single zombie ended up in casualty. "The only major issue we ran into during the shoot was when the battery that powered the GoPro and the Teradek streaming system died, after it's cells just pretty much melted," Abdullah says. "In the space of about 10 minutes, I watched some of the guys rig together a new power system out of a motorcycle battery, some wires and a lot of gaffer tape. It was like that scene in Apollo 13 when Houston had to figure out what they could do with a load of spare bits laying around..."

And this was only Level One – the team doesn't plan to stop now. "I can't reveal too much about Level Two, but we are currently working away on it, and have some very exciting things planned, and really are going to expand on everything from the first one," Abdullah teases. "I'm currently designing and building the props and set pieces, and the rest of the team are hard at work developing the tech we'll need, and new game mechanics. There will be a slight change in genre and tone, and it will be pretty soon so watch this space!" Maybe this time it'll be a platformer? ■ ***Louise Blain***

Watch this!

Not seen it yet? Check out the full video at http://bit.ly/gmchatfps and go behind the scenes at http://bit.ly/gmfpsbts

WATCH THIS! WATCH THIS! WATCH THIS! WATCH THIS! WATCH THIS! WATCH THIS! WATCH THIS! WATCH THIS!

GM GLOBAL MASTER

We take a covetous eye to the toys of the Tokyo Game Show



CHICKEN GUN

Yes, there's more MGSV Play Arts Kai figures on the way, and yes, the chicken hat is in there. It's just a prototype for now, but that doesn't make us want it any less. Add in D-Dog for £150 and prepare for bankruptcy.



FANTASY VIOLENCE

The game might not be out yet, but Square Enix was happy to show off the incoming FFXV models. On show amongst a slew of prototype figures, Noctis comes with a stack of different hands and weaponry.



KAT FIGHT

Well this isn't fair. The Japanese version of Gravity Rush on PS4 comes with a beautiful model of Kat and her gravity-defying feline. To add insult to injury, it's a Figma model, so is fully articulated. Some hope exists though – there's a petition to bring the figure west.

PRO TIPS!
Bosses? We laugh in the face of bosses. And now you can too!

Format 3DS **Publisher** Nintendo **Developer** Nintendo EPD, Grezzo **ETA** Out now

TRI FORCE HEROES TAMED!

How to beat Hytopia's horrors with Link's triumphant triumvirate



1 Margoma

Slide into the arena, and Margoma will appear and start spinning around. Firstly, form a totem with a bomb-carrying Link on top. Attract its attention with a bomb, but try not to blow up the pillars, as they inhibit its movement, which is no bad thing. Keep your distance until it sprouts spikes – get in a safe place, and when it crashes and its top opens up, get close and lob a bomb in the hole. Margoma will be stunned, so throw Link on top and slash away at its eye. Stack up with the third Link and repeat the trick, remembering that you need to be in control of the middle Link to throw the top one.

2 Arrghus

This one's really easy once you know what to do. Grapple each eye, then slash it twice quickly. If you don't manage to get the second hit in, wait for them to return to the body, or use the water rod to lift them back out. For the second stage, either wait on the ground and grapple, or use the water rod to stun the eyes, then slash them. Finally, form a totem, grapple its eye (yes, again!) and hack away when it falls.

3 Moldorm

This one can be a real pain. Drop into the arena, taking care to avoid the flame pillars. Moldorm tracks the Link you're controlling, so use this to distract it while you target its tail with the boomerang. When its tail rises, lift up the bow-wielding Link and move around the edges, forcing Moldorm to extend itself so you can shoot across its body. Repeat the process with a full totem and it'll eventually explode.

4 Blizzagia

Now here's a different perspective! Watch where the snake is looking – just dodge to the side when its eye flashes, get in close and whack its head with the hammer until it retreats. After a few hits, Blizzagia will cover the area in a sheet of ice (here's where the Cosy Parka outfit comes in handy). You can melt the ice crystals on its body with fireballs if you like, but you're better off continuing to target its head with the hammer. As its circular movements narrow, try to squeeze through the gap for a final hit on the outside. Once you've exposed the red blob on Blizzagia's head, form a two-Link totem and slash away at it. Or, if you're running low on health, there's a safe spot right at the bottom of the arena where it can't get at you. Lob fireballs from there and it will eventually perish. A bit cheaty, but it works.

5 The Lady's Pets

It's the first three bosses again! Throw one Link towards the bombs at the side of the arena. Lob one across to a two-Link totem, then throw it in the hole. You know what to do next. Now, you need to move quickly: pick up a Link and throw him to where the hearts are. This should distract Moldorm long enough to hit its tail with the gust jar. Repeat. Finally, grapple Arrghus' main eye while avoiding the larger ones as you hack at its prone torso.

6 Stalchampion

A simple but enjoyable scrap, this one. Quickly form a two-Link totem with the boomerang-toting Link on top. Use your spare man to distract Stalchampion, then quickly switch and chuck the boomerang while its back is turned, or just after it has thrown its weapon. Stalchampion will hop around, so hit it again and it will collapse into pieces. The spiky bud will damage you on contact, so be sure to move around to the other side of the rib cage and strike as many hammer blows as you can. Quickly reform the totem as Stalchampion starts to reassemble, and then run to the edge of the central circle before repeating until it cracks. Make sure you're outside the circle for Stalchampion's powered-up slam attack, and carry on using the same tactics until just a floating skull remains. Stay as a pair and aggro the skull, moving back as it dives while throwing the boomerang to stun it. Finally, mash the attack button until it stops twitching. Job done.

7 Prismantus

Wait until its spinning slows and time your attack to hit the button with the Link of the matching colour. After two hits, back away and repeat until it's stunned. Throw a Link on top and swing that sword. You'll need a full-size totem during the next stage, and two for its final form. As it charges its laser attack, run behind Prismantus and follow the beam so it doesn't hit you. Steer clear while it bounces around, and rush in when it stops for a breather. ■



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LEAN, MEAN, TOLKIEN MACHINE

Never have a staring contest with an orc – they're sore losers, insufferable winners, and some of them don't even have eyelids. Better to just chop their heads off in Middle-earth: Shadow Of Mordor, available in our print and bundle subscriptions, and save yourself the pupil-strain.

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COMPETITION

WIN! A BB-8 DROID



To celebrate the release of Star Wars: The Force Awakens, we are giving readers the chance to win one of five BB-8 droids by Sphero.

With this gadget you can design a route for BB-8 and control from your smart device. You can also create and send holographic videos.

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WHAT EPISODE IS STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS?

A. VII | **B.** VI | **C.** IV

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By taking part you agree to be bound by the Competition Rules. Open to UK and Republic of Ireland residents aged 18 and over. The closing date is 11:59pm on 31 December 2015 (GMT). Five winners drawn at random from the correct entries will be entitled to one BB-8 droid each. Specification may vary from pictured model. Only one entry per household; multiple entries will be disqualified. No cash equivalent. See www.futureplc.com/competition-rules for full terms and conditions.

Note: BB-8 is controlled by a smartphone app, which is available on Android and iOS. You are responsible for ensuring that BB-8 is compatible with your phone.

NEXT MONTH...

GamesMaster 298

ON SALE 3 DECEMBER









GAME OF THE YEAR

Which title from the last 12 months will walk away crowned as GM's favourite?

Also next issue...

It's a review overload, with Fallout 4, Rise Of The Tomb Raider, & Call Of Duty: Black Ops III

...plus loads more!





Due to the unpredictable nature of the gaming world, all contents are subject to change.

GM

GAME GUIDE

Your easy, at-a-glance index of what games to get for which machine. These are what we deem the absolute best experiences to pick up right now.



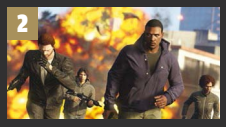
MULTIPLATFORM

1



DARK SOULS
Combining challenge, intrigue, and desolate beauty like nothing before or since. The finest game ever made.

2



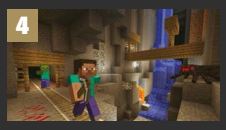
GRAND THEFT AUTO V
The most comprehensive and densely-packed sandbox going, full of wonderful distractions and typical Rockstar humour.

3



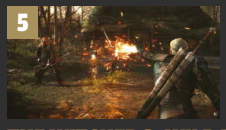
THE WALKING DEAD
Some of the greatest interactive storytelling that gaming has to offer – and season two even outdoes the original.

4



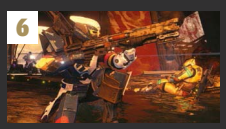
MINECRAFT
The phenomenon shows no signs of abating. Far more than just a game, this is a magnificent creative outlet.

5



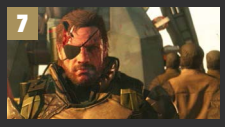
THE WITCHER 3: WILD HUNT
An epic proposition that truly lived up to its promise. Vast, mature and engaging – and one of the best fantasy RPGs ever.

6



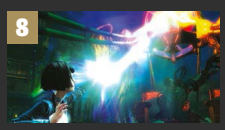
DESTINY: THE TAKEN KING
One year and three chunks of DLC later and Bungie has finally made Destiny the shooter-RPG it was always meant to be.

7



METAL GEAR SOLID V: THE PHANTOM PAIN
Hideo's stunning last hurrah brings open-world action to the revered series.

8



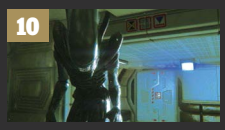
BIOSHOCK INFINITE
What a world, what a story, and *what* a twist. Plus the original still deserves to be played, eight years after release.

9



BATMAN: ARKHAM KNIGHT
Expert storytelling, incredible visuals, and a utility belt full of tricks make this the ultimate superhero fantasy.

10



ALIEN: ISOLATION
Survival horror reinvented. Finally the treatment that the movie deserves, and an experience of remarkable intensity.

11 **FAR CRY 4**

12 **DIABLO III**

13 **MASS EFFECT 2**

14 **ULTRA STREET FIGHTER IV**

15 **PORTAL 2**

PLAYSTATION 4

1



BLOODBORNE
FromSoft finds the number one spot again with the greatest PS4 exclusive to date. Brilliant, bold, and brutal.

2



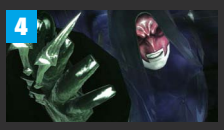
TOWERFALL ASCENSION
Still nothing on current-gen has come close to matching the multiplayer thrills found in this arrow-flinging battler.

3



THE LAST OF US REMASTERED
Naughty Dog brings all of its strengths to the fore, fusing engaging gameplay with believable, emotive storytelling.

4



FINAL FANTASY XIV: HEAVENSWARD
The MMO on consoles, with extensive new content adding to its appeal.

5



EVERYBODY'S GONE TO THE RAPTURE
An emotional, gorgeous, familiar, and wholly – ahem – enrapturing tale.

6 **JOURNEY**

7 **UNTIL DAWN**

8 **LITTLEBIGPLANET 3**

9 **NIDHOGG**

10 **GALAK-Z: THE DIMENSIONAL**

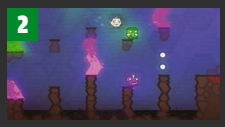
XBOX ONE

1



HALO: THE MASTER CHIEF COLLECTION
With five full Halos included, this is the best value gaming package ever.

2



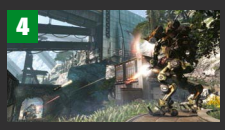
KALIMBA
An indie hit for Xbox and something completely different, this co-op puzzler is packed with charm and invention.

3



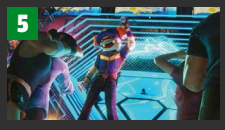
FORZA HORIZON 2
If it's automotive fantasy fulfilment that you crave, then look no further. Horizon's current-gen debut is a sight to behold.

4



TITANFALL
The first big XO exclusive truly delivered, and Respawn's debut is still serving up bombastic multiplayer action.

5



SUNSET OVERDRIVE
Insomniac is back in the groove, bringing forth crazy weapons and an open world bursting with colour and life.

6 **ORI & THE BLIND FOREST**

7 **RARE REPLAY**

8 **DEAD RISING 3**

9 **MAX: THE CURSE OF BROTHERHOOD**

10 **MASSIVE CHALICE**

CONNOISSEUR'S CHOICE

Only the finest gaming vintages, handpicked by the GM team



This month, Sam uncorks himself a bottle of Street Fighter II

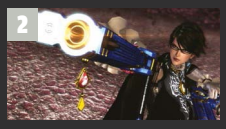
This arcade classic made one hell of an entrance back in 1991, kicking off the fighting game boom. The intricate and strategic systems set the stage for every fighter to follow it, and that killer gameplay still holds up today. Combine that with its truly iconic sound design and graphics, and you're on to a classic that's still worth dipping into – a masterpiece that has stood the test of time, and continues to appeal to new gaming generations. Pick it up on Wii U. Hadouken!



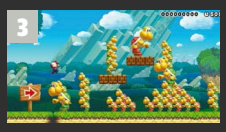
Wii U



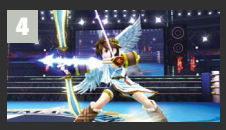
1 **MARIO KART 8**
Reinvention is what Nintendo does best, and nowhere is that more apparent than in this party-fuelling karter reborn.



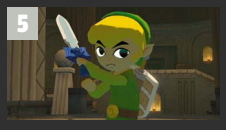
2 **BAYONETTA 2**
Proof that every so often more of the same isn't a bad thing at all. Everything good about the first, but better.



3 **SUPER MARIO MAKER**
The most brilliantly accessible level creation game around, dripping with Nintendo's slick signature style.



4 **SUPER SMASH BROS**
A perfect sofa-based multiplayer pick. An irresistible line-up, and bursting with modes to bum-bash your buds across.



5 **THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER HD**
Arguably the best Zelda made better, with visuals to make your eyes water.

6 AFFORDABLE SPACE ADVENTURES
7 SPLATOON
8 EARTHBOUND
9 HYRULE WARRIORS
10 PIKMIN 3

PC



1 **GUILD WARS 2**
Still the benchmark for PC MMOs. No subs fee, and a vast, storied world constantly updated with new stuff.



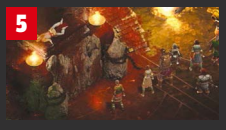
2 **TOTAL WAR: ATTILA**
The kings of RTS have outdone themselves with this latest nomadic take on the warfaring formula.



3 **HEARTHSTONE**
Try and walk away from it. We dare you. Blizzard has given the collectible card game genre an accessible shot in the arm.



4 **ELITE: DANGEROUS**
Utterly unique. No other game out there gives you the chance to carve your own path through as massive a universe.



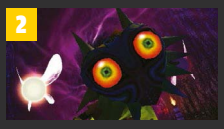
5 **PILLARS OF ETERNITY**
Bringing back the halcyon days of Infinity Engine-powered RPGs, only with modern visuals and a fresh fantasy setting.

6 DOTA 2
7 THE ELDER SCROLLS V: SKYRIM
8 KERBAL SPACE PROGRAM
9 ENDLESS LEGEND
10 HER STORY

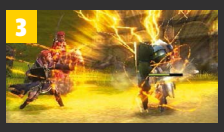
3DS



1 **POKÉMON X/Y**
The move to 3D has only improved this classic series, which has never been in better form. Get your trade face on.



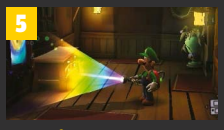
2 **THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: MAJORA'S MASK 3D**
A masterpiece from the past reworked to hit the hardcore and still be approachable.



3 **FIRE EMBLEM: AWAKENING**
Play this with permadeath switched on and you're in for a generation-spanning heartbreaker like no other.



4 **XENOBLADE CHRONICLES 3D**
Nintendo does the impossible, bringing a vast and glorious open world to its diddy dual-screener. Witchcraft, surely...



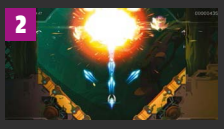
5 **LUIGI'S MANSION 2**
Bubbling over with personality, this long-awaited sequel is still the pinnacle of puzzling on your 3DS. Yello?

6 MONSTER HUNTER 4 ULTIMATE
7 ANIMAL CROSSING: NEW LEAF
8 SUPER SMASH BROS
9 SUPER MARIO 3D LAND
10 PROF LAYTON VS PHOENIX WRIGHT

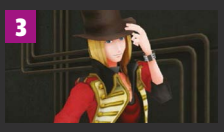
PS VITA



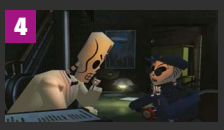
1 **PERSONA 4 GOLDEN**
Never been to Japanese high school? Then this stylish JRPG can help correct that. Only with demons and murders.



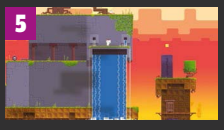
2 **VELOCITY 2X**
For those with the need for speed, this is the way to go. Frantic running and gunning perfectly distilled.



3 **ZERO ESCAPE: VIRTUE'S LAST REWARD**
The current king of the crop in terms of Vita's visual novel renaissance.



4 **GRIM FANDANGO**
It's back from the grave! You'll laugh. You'll cry. You'll steal more bread of the dead than you could possibly need.



5 **FEZ**
Bright, beautiful, and inventive – and perfectly suited to handheld. Creative exploration that doesn't get old.

6 HOTLINE MIAMI 2: WRONG NUMBER
7 TEARAWAY
8 STEINS;GATE
9 FINAL FANTASY X/X-2 REMASTER
10 GRAVITY RUSH

GM'S SUPER-HARD STAR WARS CHARACTER QUIZ

Put the names to these intergalactic faces

You may think you've played your fair share of Star Wars videogames, but can you name these oft-forgotten heroes and villains? We've even given you clues! This should be a doddle...



1. THE ACE PILOT

- Personally picked by Darth Vader to lead his ace TIE squadron...
- And then personally denounced as a traitor and locked up.
- Understandably a bit miffed, she got her own back by arranging protracted make-out sessions with the Sith Lord's apprentice.



2. THE FORCE-SENSITIVE

- Spent her adolescence hanging out with Mandalorians. This chill friendship came to an abrupt, superweapon-induced end.
- Leather-clad bounty hunter turned leather-clad Jedi Sentinel.
- Has a complicated relationship with Wookies.



3. THE DASHING SCOUNDREL

- An Imperial Naval cadet turned smuggler and mercenary.
- Captain of the YT-2400 light freighter Outrider.
- Took part in the battle of Hoth, went toe-to-toe with Boba Fett, and saved Princess Leia from the Black Sun crime syndicate.



4. THE LEGITIMATE BUSINESSMAN

- Just an honest garbage hauler, nothing to see here.
- Definitely not a feared criminal kingpin, no siree!
- 100% legitimate waste disposal professional. 0% association with Jabba the Hutt.



5. THE QUARRY

- Wanted for rigging beast fights. Oh, and also for doing a bunch of horrible murders.
- Proud (and entirely legitimate) owner of the heavy starfighter class ship Longshot.
- Currently on the run from a certain well-equipped Mandalorian.

Answers: 1 - Juno Eclipse (The Force Unleashed 1 and 2), 2 - Mira (Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic II), 3 - Dash Rendar (Star Wars: Shadows Of The Empire), 4 - Reelo Baruk (Star Wars: Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast), 5 - Meeko Ghinlee (Star Wars: Bounty Hunter)

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@ALTHIOS

GONNA PLAY ALL OF THEM WHEN THE NATHAN DRAKE COLLECTION COMES OUT! **CAN'T WAIT MAN**
@JAMESBARNESY

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@HARRYPLESTER

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@KRAZYLALALAPSN

I DO **LOVE** NATHAN DRAKE... **I'M SUPER EXCITED**
@_BRYONY_

I **NEED** TO PLAY THE ENTIRE **UNCHARTED SERIES ALL OVER AGAIN** ON PS4
@GEMODAWN

AWESOME
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IT'S ONE OF THE **GREATEST SERIES EVER CREATED**
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@HEYMARKD

THIS IS FROM THE PLAYERS

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